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THE CRADLE

OF

THE BLUE NILE.

A VISIT TO THE COURT OF KING JOHN
OF ETHIOPIA.

By E. A. DE COSSON, F.R.G.S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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1877.

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PREFACE.

In 1868, the attention of Europe was for a short time directed to Abyssinia by the capture of Magdala, and the self-inflicted death of King Theodorus; but, on the safe return of the British troops, public curiosity subsided, and few people are acquainted with the present state of that wild and romantic Ethiopic Kingdom which, after having felt so signally the power of England, was suddenly left without a ruler, or even a direct heir to the throne.

Fortunately for Abyssinia, though many chiefs had rebelled against Theodorus, there was no Communist party in the country to upset established institutions that it could not replace, and the chief, whose talent and courage should enable him to overcome his rivals, and place himself on the vacant throne, had still the prospect of ruling with absolute power over the vast kingdom and warlike people of Ethiopia.

Such a chief was Kassa of Tigre, a prince claiming descent from the royal dynasty founded by Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Quiet and unobtrusive in his demeanour, Kassa excited little notice at the time of the English invasion, but the sagacity, courage, and energy of character which he has since displayed, show that he was not unfitted to lift the crown which had proved too heavy a burden for his predecessor.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to describe a visit that I paid to the court of this remarkable Prince, during a journey I made through Abyssinia and Upper Nubia in 1873.

I have deemed it best to sketch the daily incidents of the journey almost as they were entered in my diary, for being a tyro in the art of writing, I have feared to lose in accuracy by attempting to gain in style. It should also be understood that many of the ideas which I have noted down are not advanced as the result of mature reflection, but rather as illustrating the passing impressions produced *at the time* by the scenes I witnessed.

What I saw myself I have described faithfully, what I was told by others I cannot of course vouch for, but, with the exceptions of some traditions and superstitions illustrating native character, I have related nothing that I have reason to believe is incorrect.

As my knowledge of the Eastern tongues is limited, I have contented myself with endeavouring to convey the *sound* of Arabic and Abyssinian words as they are pronounced by the natives, and, like most travellers, I have adopted the foreign pronunciation of the vowels, except in words, like Fakeer, backsheesh, &c., the orthography of which has been, to some extent, established by custom.

If I have censured the encroachments of Egypt on the Abyssinian frontier, and the slave trade of Upper Nubia, it is not because I have any reason for being more partial to one country than the other, but simply because I believe that these things are retarding civilization in Africa, and that it is the duty of every honest man to raise his voice against injustice and cruelty.

My journey to Abyssinia and Nubia was undertaken solely for my own amusement, but when chance threw

in my way the means of perhaps saving many of my fellow-creatures from slavery, I felt bound to exert my utmost influence with King Yohannes towards that end.

Should my efforts result in any future good, should some traveller hereafter find this book of use to him, or even should it only enable one of my readers to while away an hour or two pleasantly, I shall feel well repaid for the time that I have devoted to writing it.

68, PALL MALL, *Feb.* 10*th*, 1877.

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THE CRADLE

OF

THE BLUE NILE.

CHAPTER I.

CAIRO TO MASSOWAH.

On February 1st, 1873, my brother and I left Grand Cairo, with the intention of making a shooting expedition along the banks of the Atbara; a river which rises in the highlands of Abyssinia, and flowing through the plains of the Soudan, or country of the blacks, eventually joins the Nile near Berber, in Upper Nubia. Our proposed route was first to Suez, and thence by steamer to Suakin, on the west shore of the Red Sea, whence we intended to make our way across the desert to the junction of the Nile and Atbara; our design being to journey up the banks of that river, in pursuit of game, as far as the mountains of Abyssinia. Subsequent events, however, induced us to visit Abyssinia *first*, and to penetrate into the interior of that country as far as Gondar, the capital of Ethiopia, and lake Tzana, the great reservoir of the Blue Nile. It was not, therefore, until my homeward journey through Sennar

and Upper Nubia, that I saw Berber and the junction of the Atbara with the Nile.

Our party consisted of my brother, myself, and two dragomans; one a swarthy Caireen, named Habash Mustafa Ibraheem, who spoke Arabic and English; the other a pale-faced Syrian, called Baulo Darbulo, a native of Jerusalem, who, besides Arabic, understood Italian and a very few words of French and German. These men proved good servants; Mustafa being strong and faithful, while Baulo was willing and intelligent, though hardly strong enough physically for the hardships of Abyssinian travel. We had engaged another dragoman, but at the last moment his Sheik—in Cairo, all classes, even beggars, have their Sheik—forbade him to come, on the ground that as he was married he could not be allowed to escape from his family duties indefinitely, for it was quite uncertain how long we might be away. In case one of us should require to return before the other, we prepared an outfit that would enable us to travel separately if necessary, and Mustafa was entrusted with the purchase of dry provisions sufficient to last us for four months. We also provided ourselves with a large double-roofed tent, quicksilver for hardening bullets, English rifles, saddles, medicines, instruments, and other necessaries for travelling in the interior, too numerous to be mentioned. Of how little use this expensive outfit proved among the Abyssinian mountains will be seen hereafter. What extra servants and horses we might require we decided to get up the country, as they would stand the climate better than any we could procure in Lower Egypt.

We had now been nearly three months staying at Cairo, and during this time the Consul-General had applied to the Viceroy for firmans to facilitate our journey through the Soudan; these documents had been made out, and were only waiting to have the official seal attached to them, which would render them all powerful, when the festivities, in celebration of the marriage of the Viceroy's eldest son, commenced, and all Cairo took a holiday; the government offices remained closed for weeks together; grave Pachas were to be seen crowding the ballroom of the palace; Prince Hassan, regardless of oriental dignity, actually danced with a fair unbeliever; nobody attended to business; and when the day arrived on which the vessel destined to carry us down the Red Sea was to take her departure, the firmans were not ready, and we were forced to start without them, contenting ourselves with the polite minister's promises that their contents should be telegraphed to Suakin, where we should not arrive for some time, as only a few slow-going Egyptian vessels visit that obscure port, the entrance to which is guarded by dangerous coral reefs extending far out to sea. I may here mention that the dilatory minister's promises were no better than ministerial promises in general; and it was only *after* our travels were ended, that we at last received the firmans, duly sealed, as we were passing through Cairo on our way home.

From Cairo we went to Suez. This town since the completion of the great canal has lost the major part of its population. Instead of the noisy crowds of work-

men that once thronged its streets and bazaars, half-starved dogs now prowl among the ruins of the tenantless houses, or dash frightened through the nearly deserted bazaar, where a few Levantines and Greeks still try to cheat the unwary foreigner. At night all is silence and darkness, except when a P. & O. steamer arrives, and the Suez hotel is for a few hours gay with guests. Those who regard their safety do well to avoid the lonely streets after dark. At one time few nights passed without some case of stabbing and robbery; these crimes were mostly committed by low class Greeks; the authorities, as usual, did little to discover the offenders; but at last some determined Europeans, whose business forced them to be much at Suez, decided that in self-defence they would take the discovery and punishment of the murderers in their own hands, and morning after morning, some one of these ruffians was found lying shot on the very spot where he had so often lain in wait to murder others; then the cowardly Greeks and Levantines were seized with terror, scarcely daring to venture from their houses at night, and assassinations were, for a time, of less frequent occurrence; however, a few months after I sailed down the Red Sea, Suez was the scene of the murder of a young English officer returning from India, who was stabbed by a Greek in the presence of several of his comrades. I shall not delay further to describe Suez, but will at once proceed with our journey down the Red Sea.

February 3rd.—We embarked on board the steamship "Kosseir" with our servants and baggage. The

vessel belonged to the Egyptian Government, and was bound with coal for Suakin and Massowah. There were 200 soldiers on board going to the Soudan; some of the officers were accompanied by their Hareems, portions of the deck being curtained off for the accommodation of the ladies. In the East, when an officer wants to pray, he tells a private to give him his coat, and kicking off his slippers, uses it as a carpet; these devout exercises were going on all day long, though I fear the Prophet's injunctions about spirits were not strictly observed; strong waters apparently being in great request among the faithful.

Our only fellow passengers in the saloon were General K. and Captain R., who were on their way to Abyssinia with letters from Her Majesty and Lord Granville to the King of that country. General K. who had passed five years alone in Abyssinia in the service of his Ethiopic Majesty, was now returning from a mission to the European powers, asking for their interference to protect Ethiopia against some alleged encroachments of the Egyptian soldiery on her frontier.

At nightfall we were still steaming down the Gulf of Suez, which was as calm and tranquil as a lake.

February 4th.—We passed the "diamond gates of Shadwan," as some poet has somewhere styled them, I know not why, the island being a barren mountain, sterile and waterless, where only snakes abide. Our captain was a corpulent Turk, a faithful son of the Prophet, who, taking to heart the homely maxim, that to spare the rod spoils the child, had some of his crew

"rope-ended" every morning, before breakfast, with fatherly perseverance; taking care first himself to *feel* whether the culprits were too thickly clad for the lash to produce its proper effect. His whole science of navigation consisted in keeping in sight of some well-known landmark, and our course, therefore, gracefully followed the line of the coast, and was most erratic. It often happened that we awoke in the morning to find that we had drifted during the night uncomfortably near to some low-lying coral reef, girded by an ominous line of white breakers; however, an especial providence seems to take care of Turkish sailors, as it does of midshipmen and undergraduates. So we comforted ourselves with the Oriental maxim "*Agitel lil Sheitán*" (Hurry is the Devil's), and were fain to be content with the fat captain's assurance that, if Allah willed it, we might hope some day to arrive at the end of our journey; and if not, was it not written above, "BISMILLAH!" it was not for him to go against the ways of destiny. Thus four more days glided calmly by with little to chronicle of interest; for though, in the world, each single day is an epitome of human life, and there is not an age, from infancy to senility, a passion, a pain, a virtue, or a vice, that has not left its mark on the life of some human creature, between sunrise and sunset; at sea, in fair weather, the day divides itself into little more than the intervals between rising, observing the course of the vessel, feeding, and retiring to rest; while the advent of a troop of porpoises, a stray bird alighting on the mast, or even a passing gale, becomes quite a

pleasing break to the monotony of existence. On the morning of February 8th we sighted Suakin, the only port between Kosseir and Massowah on the west side of the Red Sea. To make the harbour we had to run through a narrow and tortuous channel between two coral reefs, and the old pilot, who was of most orientally ample proportions, mounted to the cross-trees, where he stood with a huge turban on his head, and his long white robes blowing in the breeze, a sight "once seen to be forgotten never."

The principal part of Suakin stands on a little coral island about a hundred yards from the main land, and the square flat-topped houses have no pretence to architectural beauty; but some of them are adorned with latticed windows in carved wood, which have a very picturesque effect as they stand out in bold relief from the dazzling white of the walls. In the harbour we saw many native trading vessels, painted in gaudy colours, with low pointed bows, high carved sterns and thick masts raking *forward*, which irresistibly reminded one of the days when the battle of Lepanto was fought, and Spain's great satirist lost his hand. Landing on the island we proceeded to the house of the then Governor, Achmed Effendi, a thin graceful Arab, who received us with the high-bred courtesy of his nation, and regaled us with the rose-water sherbet, and coffee flavoured with cloves, without which no visit in the East would be complete, but he could give us no news of our firmans: so we decided to go on with General K. and his friend, as far as Adowa, the

capital of Tigre in Abyssinia, where we should find the King of Ethiopia, and be able to procure men and horses to go shooting on the Takazze, a river which joins the Atbara, in Upper Nubia.

On leaving the Governor's house, we embarked in a small canoe, made from the trunk of a single tree, sharpened at both ends, and scooped out in the centre; a mahogany-coloured native, by means of a single paddle, propelled this frail bark to the mainland, where all the trade of the town appeared to be carried on. On the shore were several bales of cotton from the interior, awaiting shipment to Suez, and rotting in the meantime. Scattered here and there, lay the parts of a great steam-engine, which the Government had intended to erect at Kassala, but, with its usual wasteful carelessness, had abandoned here, finding it too heavy to transport across the desert.

Suakin, under an energetic government, might be the great depôt for all the exports and imports of the Soudan; a country with a rich trade in hides, senna, ivory, and bees'-wax, besides *unlimited* resources for the growth of cotton and gum-arabic. Nature has indeed been lavish in her gifts to Egypt. Possessed of an inexhaustible river, and a glorious climate, her plains, were they but irrigated, might be rich with every kind of harvest, and her ports teeming with trade; but a fatal apathy seems to reign through the land, the Pachas are rapacious, their underlings indolent, the Government wasteful in the extreme, the motto of the country, "*Bukkara inshállâh*" ("To-morrow, if it please

Allah")—to-morrow, *always* to-morrow, *never* to-day. What wonder, then, that instead of smiling in plenty, her peasantry are starving, and her very palm-trees groaning under a heavy taxation!*

In the open spaces between most of the better sort of houses on the main land were *Krals*, or enclosures, formed of the boughs of trees interlaced, which enclosed little round conical huts, made of dried skins stretched over a bamboo framework. In these huts were numbers of women and children, all naked, or nearly so; the former generally industriously engaged grinding corn between two rough stones, while their lords and masters swaggered about the town in twos and threes, with their spears in their hands.

The Hadarba Arabs, who are the natives of this district, are a tall, very dark race, whose hair, though woolly, is of considerable length, and generally worn hanging straight down round the sides of the head like a woman's ringlets, while on the top it is combed straight up, like the head of a mop, the whole being usually covered with raw fat, and sometimes bleached to a light yellow by means of quick-lime. On their feet they wear sandals of gaily-coloured leather, and round their waists a belt of the same material, supporting an iron knife, curved at the end into the shape of a hook, and sharp at both edges. Their arms are adorned, above the elbow, with two or three leather bracelets, to which are attached little red bags containing charms: they also wear some of these charms round the neck, while

* In Egypt each date palm is subject to a yearly tax.

a single piece of native cloth, wrapped once or twice round the loins, with the loose end thrown over the left shoulder, serves to complete their costume. All the Arabs of the Soudan appear to wear charms attached to one or both arms. In Arabia the arm appears also to have been chosen as the place to suspend amulets to, for we are told in the old romance of "Delhemeh" that the wife of El-Herris, a chief whose territory was in the Hidjaz, requested an old Sheik to write an amulet to be tied on her infant's right arm as soon as it should be born, upon which amulet the family and pedigree of the child was recorded.* I fancy the wild tribes of the Soudan rarely have writing in their amulets; more often they contain part of the robe of a deceased Fakeer, who, as likely as not, has died of plague or cholera, and thus spreads the disease after his death; or sometimes they enclose the bristles from the nose of a lion, which are supposed to preserve the wearer from the attacks of wild beasts. We also know that the Afars, who, though nominally Mussulmans, worship evil spirits, believe in charms for love and hate.†

The Hadarba are a commercial race, and though not a nomadic tribe, often travel as far as the Blue Nile and Kordofan, to buy ivory and ostrich feathers, in which they trade.

At the back of the town was a barren piece of ground, where the Arabs were wont to drive their herds to

* Lane's Modern Egyptians, vol. ii.

† Paper read before the Royal Geographical Society, 26th April, 1869.

market. In the centre of this a negro woman, stripped to the waist, was dancing a strange Eastern dance, while a party of Arab girls, seated in a circle round her, beat time on earthenware *darábukkehs*, and an old *gházee* played on a two-stringed *kemengeh*, or viol. Behind this Ethiopian Venus stood a swarthy Nubian slave, with a long whip in his upraised hand, which he every now and then cracked above her head, to incite her to fresh endeavours. She would then smile so as to show all her white teeth, while her breast rose and fell, and every muscle of her body seemed capable of separate motion; the undulating movement of the hips being, as in the Spanish gipsy dances, the great feature of the performance. The dusky crowd that had collected round her applauded loudly; applause in which we could hardly join, though it must have been from such rude contortions as these, that the graceful Andalusians (whose every motion is the poetry of dancing) first derived their *Jaléo* and *Olé*, through the *Ráwázi* of the East; but then "beauty is the poetry of women"—an element which was rather wanting here. At the sight of a rupee, which K. gave them, the performers uttered the shrill, tremulous cry which throughout Africa is used by the women to denote joy or sorrow, as the case may be, and which is more like the call of a dog-whistle with a pea in it than anything I can think of.

As we were returning to the steamer, we passed a group of small children having their heads shaved with the curved iron knives I have before mentioned.

In the East there is a superstition that to shave the heads of children preserves them from ophthalmia, and here they generally shave both sides of the head, leaving a narrow line of hair running from front to back in the centre, which stands upright like the mane of a Norwegian pony. Sometimes, also, a little tuft of hair is left growing over each of the ears, and then the boys look like young clowns; but this, of course, is according to the taste of the mothers.

February 9th was Sunday.—We spent all day on the coral reefs, gathering the

> "Glistening shells of every dye,
> That on the margin of the Red Sea lie."

The next day the heat was so intense we did not venture from the ship.

February 11th.—There being some breeze, we took a long walk inland, and, after passing the little fort at the back of Suakin, which defends it against attack from the Arabs of the desert, wandered among the wild cotton and sweet-scented flowering shrubs which were growing luxuriantly in the open country. There were many beautiful butterflies flitting about, and presently we came to a garden where a gigantic fig-tree offered a most inviting shelter from the powerful rays of the sun: hard by it was another tree of the mimosa kind, whose delicate boughs were laden with hundreds of little round nests, with small holes in the centre, from which numberless birds of bright yellow plumage kept popping in and out, filling the air with their joyous song. To our surprise, we found the great branches of the fig-tree

scored with numbers of names and dates in Arabic. I had fancied that the mania for carving names was confined to the lower class of British and Transatlantic tourists, who spare neither the temples of Pæstum nor the house of Shakespere; but here were the records of generations of grave and dignified Arabs, who had sat under the shade of the old fig-tree, to prove the universality of the custom.

The sun was beating fiercely on the wide plain that stretches between Suakin and the mountains of the desert, as we left the shelter of the garden, and sought a spot where we could try the effect of Pertuiset's explosive bullets, which we were anxious to test. Some natives, who were watching our experiments, imbibed such wild notions of the powers of my brother's rifle, that they brought a bullet from an Arab encampment, at least a mile and a half off, which they swore had entered the Sheik's tent while that venerable man was smoking the pipe of contemplation; and would we give him some *backsheesh?*

February 12th was the last day of our stay, as the "Kosseir" was to leave for Massowah next morning. We therefore went to make our farewell *saluam* to the Governor, whom we found at his house, smoking and conversing with the principal merchant of the town; a dignified old Arab, dressed in flowing robes and a mighty turban of immaculate whiteness. Presently there appeared at the door an old man, who, from the scantiness of his attire, his obesity, and the general festivity of his aspect, looked very like some of the

ancient bronzes of Bacchus. He was a holy man, or *Fakeer*, who lived by travelling through the country, begging hospitality from the people of the villages through which he passed. His only worldly goods consisted of a strip of threadbare cloth bound round his waist, a long staff, and a pair of very dilapidated sandals; yet notwithstanding the limited nature of his possessions, he was as fat as William the Conqueror, and his whole face beamed with joviality. Achmed Effendi made him quite happy by giving him a goblet of rose-water sherbet; after drinking which, he struck a resounding blow on his chest, and stroking it affectionately downwards, gave vent to a roar of satisfaction, which would have done credit to an ancient Roman epicure eating an Anglican oyster. Happy old Fakeer! His wants are few, and his cares less. Wheresoever he journeys he is welcomed with smiles, for his arrival is hailed as an omen of good fortune. While he lives he toils not; and when he dies, rival villages will dispute for the honour of burying him. The Arab maidens will congregate around his tomb, the very earth of which will be considered as sacred; and among the simple people of the desert, his name will be revered, when the names of those who, in Europe, have striven all their lives for the laurel wreath, shall be forgotten!

February 13th.—We started from Suakin on our way to Massowah, from which port we had decided to begin our journey inland to Abyssinia. Even at this time of year the heat on the Red Sea was intense; the whole atmosphere appeared to be vibrating under the almost

perpendicular rays of the sun, and the sea seemed to simmer as if we were sailing on hot water. The thermometer registered in the coolest part of the cabin 105° Fahrenheit, and it was impossible to sleep below, so we had our beds carried on deck, where the moon was shining brightly, and being almost vertically overhead, cast no shadow, which to those who are unused to it has a strange effect. As there are some dangerous coral reefs beyond Suakin we lay at anchor all night.

February 14th.—We left the shelter of the coast, and encountered the Monsoon, which was blowing up the Red Sea, the sun being now in the southern declination. I was busy all day casting 5-ounce bullets for my elephant rifle, putting one part of quicksilver to nine of lead, which increases their weight and hardness considerably. It was very hot work standing near the furnace.

At last, February 15th, we dropped anchor in the harbour of Massowah, which is situated nearly opposite to Loheia on the coast of Yemen, and is the last civilized place on this side of the Red Sea. A sickly looking Greek doctor came on board, and condemned us to quarantine for twenty-four hours. This was the twelfth day since we left Suez, during which time we had travelled rather more than a thousand miles.

Alongside of us in the harbour lay an armed steamer, belonging to the Khedive, the crew of which looked like ghosts, for they had been stewing for months in this hot-bed of fever, waiting our arrival with the cargo of coal which would enable them to leave it. Other vessels there were none, save a few native feluccas, for

since the termination of the war with Abyssinia, and the withdrawal of our vice-consul at Massowah, few European ships find their way there, and in the hot part of the day it looks as quiet and deserted as a city of the dead.

> "Never comes the trader thither, never
> O'er the purple main
> Sounds the oath of British commerce,
> Or the accents of Cockaigne."

And not even the song of a bird enlivens the sultry silence that reigns around.

CHAPTER II.

"THE HARBOUR OF THE SHEPHERDS."

MASSOWAH, like Suakin, stands on a coral island. It used to be famous for the gold, ivory, elephants, buffalo hides, and slaves, exported from it; besides which, pearls were found along its coast.

Bruce says that "Massowah" means the harbour of the shepherds, and that it was one of those towns on the west side of the Red Sea, the conquest of which followed that of Arabia Felix, by Sinian Pacha, under Selim, Emperor of Constantinople. At first it was governed by a Pacha from Constantinople, and several unsuccessful expeditions to conquer Abyssinia were attempted from it. The tribe who lived on the mainland were then, as now, shepherds; and when the Turks, finding that they could not achieve the conquest of Abyssinia, and that under their oppressive government the trade of Massowah was rapidly falling away, withdrew the Pachalick, the chief of this tribe was appointed Naib (civil governor), of the island, in reward for the assistance his people had rendered the Turks in conquering it.

Massowah is entirely dependent on the mainland for food and water, and the Naib, when the Turkish

protection was withdrawn to a distance, thought it best to secure his position by entering into a treaty with the Abyssinians, by which he agreed to give them half the custom duties he received, on condition of remaining undisturbed in his government. Then did the Abyssinians acquire a right to receive tribute from Massowah, which they still declare belongs to them. In time the Naibs ceased to pay tribute altogether, either to the Porte, or Abyssinia, though they still received their firmans, as a matter of form, from the Sublime Porte, and from time to time both the Porte and Abyssinia claimed their tribute, and threatened to enforce its payment.

Things were still in this state a hundred years ago. Between 1810 and 1860 the Turks do not seem to have done much to disturb the west coast of the Red Sea, though they never lost an opportunity of saying that it belonged to them, and exercising some control over the governors of Massowah. But these fifty years of tranquillity were soon to be followed by a great change. In 1866 the Turkish government handed Massowah over to Egypt, who took possession of it on May 30th of that year, and not only sent troops there, but also established military stations on different points of the mainland, and distributed dresses of honour to the chiefs, whom she proclaimed to be her dependents. At first these measures did not much affect the people of the coast, as they still paid no tribute, and had yet to learn that the provinces annexed by Egypt only enjoy this sort of immunity until a favourable opportunity

occurs for enforcing the heavy and unjust taxes which oppress the rest of the country.

I fear that the Egyptian government troubles itself very little to advance civilization or really benefit in any way this part of Africa, and the slave trade naturally prospers in the hands of government *employés* who derive much profit from what may be truly called the "black mail" they receive for every slave exported to Arabia. I shall have occasion to speak of the slave trade later,* so I will only mention here an anecdote that was told me by the French vice-consul of Massowah, which shews in a rather amusing manner how well the resources of the place for furnishing slaves are known to the authorities at Cairo.

Some time before our arrival at Massowah, an armed sloop one morning anchored in the harbour, and displayed the vice-regal flag of Egypt, as a signal that she had on board a great dignitary of the State, with a firman from the Khedive. Of course all Massowah was in a state of excitement, and the governor hastened to his divan, trembling in his slippers, for he well knew what short notice an Eastern Potentate gives to a servant who has fallen into disgrace, and a horrible conviction forced itself on his mind, that the great personage who had arrived in such state, must be a new governor come to supersede him. Although the days have passed when a Pacha knew that each firman might contain an order to get himself strangled forthwith, after which it would only remain for him to kiss rever-

* See Appendix, note A.

ently the seal of his princely master, and execute his behest, a royal firman is still looked upon with great respect in the East (where to hear is proverbially to obey), and the governor of Massowah prepared to receive his guest with all due ceremony. This distinguished person at last arrived, attended by a numerous retinue. He was a tall, stout Nubian, of ebony blackness, and low indeed were the *salaams* that greeted him, for he proved a far greater man than a new governor or even a military Pacha. In fact he was chief eunuch of the household to the Khedive's mother, and had come to require that Massowah should furnish some hundred or so of slaves and eunuchs for the royal marriage ceremonies at Cairo, which I have before alluded to. While this slave stayed, his word was law and his slightest wish humbly obeyed; and, when he left, he was accompanied to the shore with as much ceremony and honour as if he had been a great general, or distinguished minister. Thus, in the anomalous state of Eastern society, the governor of a province may yet find himself the servant of a slave.

From what I can learn, the people of "the harbour of the shepherds" appear formerly to have had rather the character of wolves in sheep's clothing. Bruce says that it was their habit to kill the unwary traveller who landed there in order to divide his property, and speaking of the town he calls it "that slaughter-house of strangers." No doubt the people of Massowah are better now, but even in the present day I fear a modern Diogenes might have to continue his search among

them a long time before he would find the honest man he wanted.

The nearest fresh water springs to Massowah, and even they are brackish, are at Arkiko, three miles distant on the mainland, for the barren coral reef on which the town is built is without a trace of moisture or vegetation anywhere; but I believe means have lately been taken to bring a supply of fresh water to it.

The inhabitants of the mainland are a race of Arabs, called Shohos, who in general dress and appearance somewhat resemble the Hadarbas, before described, but they are migratory in their habits, and live by tending herds of cattle, which they drive from place to place as the pasture suits them; these herds often belong to Abyssinians, who entrust them to the Shohos in order that they may feed in the rich valleys of the lowlands during the dry season, and when the tropical rains commence they are driven back to the table lands of Abyssinia. Though the Shohos are a wild and uncivilized race, I believe they rarely fail to return safely to their owners the herds that have been intrusted to them; they live in little round huts made of branches, and their arms are a knife, spear, and a round buffalo-hide shield. Their chief bears the title of *Naib*, but he has now little power, for the Egyptian government has practically taken possession of all the mainland lying between Massowah and Subaguma, of which more will be said hereafter.

In Massowah there live great numbers of Banyans,

Indian Mahometan merchants, who act as "go betweens," through whose hands passes the greater part of the trade from the interior.

The island of Massowah is situated at the mouth of a bay, sheltered from the wind by high mountains; it is one of the hottest places on the Red Sea, and the inhabitants are subject to fever, dysentery, and ague; they are therefore a sickly-looking race. Even in mid-winter the thermometer is often at above 100° Fahrenheit in the shade, and to Europeans the climate is most fatal.

On February 15th we were released from quarantine and went on shore. M. Munzinger, the then governor of Massowah, was away at Cairo, and an agent, called Abdil Effendi, was acting in his place; to him therefore we went, where

> "Begirt by many a gallant slave,
> Apparelled as becomes the brave,"

he reposed on a sumptuous divan, the silver mouthpiece of a large Persian pipe between his lips, a dark red *tarboush* thrust on the back of his head, and his slipperless feet decorously crossed under him, after the proper Oriental fashion. At one side of him stood a very handsome Banyan, with a lofty turban of cloth of gold on his head, who was pleading some cause as we entered; in the background a brawny Arab, armed with a long *courbash*, or hippopotamus hide whip, stood waiting the Effendi's orders, ready to administer castigation to the soles of any offending person who might

require it, while on the right of the divan there sat a little Levantine doctor with a *dawayeh*, or case of Arab writing materials, in his hand; a sort of familiar spirit, with whom the Effendi generally held a whispered conversation before he trusted himself to speak. Old Abdil himself was a short fat man, whose face would have borne a jocular expression had it not been for a look of cunning which pervaded it, and, added to a most notable squint, quite spoiled any attractive traits which his countenance might otherwise have possessed. Round the walls of the room stood a motley group of soldiers, servants, and slaves, watching all that went on in profound silence. This ghost-like behaviour of Eastern servants is at first rather oppressive, but it is necessary in a land where they follow you like your shadow, and you are never alone.

General K. gave the Effendi a letter from the Egyptian minister at Cairo, which he read, and then pressing it to his lips and forehead, declared his readiness to find us a house, and procure camels to transport our baggage, when we left Massowah. But on our telling him that we intended visiting Abyssinia, he raised every possible obstacle to the plan, saying we should probably be killed if we went up there, and that if we would forego the journey, he himself would find us as much shooting as we could desire in the Viceroy's dominions. We had been warned at Cairo that the Egyptian government looked with little favour on travellers who came to this part of the country, as there was still much slave trading carried on here, and

it was the policy of Egypt to encroach on the frontiers of Abyssinia without exciting the notice of Europe. One gentleman (who being then in the Khedive's service should have known better) even went so far as to say that we might expect to find our coffee poisoned one day if we persisted in carrying our explorations too far. When, therefore, after uselessly exhausting his logic, the old Effendi presented us each with a *finjal* of coffee, there was a solemn and awful pause before anybody would taste it. However, Oriental etiquette allowed of no evasion, so we drank the coffee, which on this occasion happened to be very bad, and made our *salaams* to the vice-governor, who reluctantly agreed to try to procure camels for us to continue our journey. Our next visit was to the Wekeel* Hassan, a European (notwithstanding the Oriental name he went by) who had been many years a resident at Massowah, and was now, I believe, in the pay of the government. This gentleman (who I was told, though I know not if the story be true, was once an agent of police at Constantinople) was a thin, middle-aged man, with piercing, dark grey eyes, grey hair, and a long trailing grey moustache; his manner was grave and courteous, and when he learned that our house was not yet ready he at once asked us to spend the evening with him. He, too, most strongly opposed our journey to Abyssinia, telling us that Aba Kassié, a robber-chief of that country, who until lately had been a prisoner of the

* *Wekeel*, signifies agent.

government at Massowah, had just escaped, and would be in the mountains through which we must pass to reach the interior, and that it would be quite useless for us to attempt to do so, with much more to the same effect. He also advised us to dismiss the faithful Mustafa and take a servant that he would recommend to us, as he was convinced that Mustafa was a bad and dangerous man to have with us. He seemed surprised at our arrival at Massowah, admitting that a private telegram had reached him from Cairo announcing the advent of General K. and Captain R., but saying nothing about us. This was probably owing to our change of plans, as we had first intended to disembark at Suakin. He also said we should most likely be delayed a month at Massowah before we could get camels and, in short, tried to persuade us that it was hopeless to attempt a journey through Abyssinia in the present state of the country. Had not Plowden, Bell, and Powell, all been speared by the natives? Out of the five Frenchmen who went there in 1830 had not four died and the fifth gone mad?* Was not even pacific England forced to recover her captives at the expense of a difficult campaign? Had not the Consul-General at Cairo said that he washed his hands of all responsibility if we went into Abyssinia, and did not Bruce describe the mountainous country behind Massowah as one that had in all ages been most inaccessible and inhospitable to strangers? Truly Mr. Hassan seemed a prophet of evil.

*. See Appendix, note B.

Dinner was hardly concluded, when K., who from its commencement had been looking very ill, fainted, and we were forced to carry him to a solitary one-roomed house close by, where three *angareps* had been placed for our accommodation. These *angareps* were merely oblong frameworks of wood on four short legs, with strips of raw cowhide stretched from one side of the frame to the other, so as to form a sort of network, on which a piece of carpet was laid by way of mattress. Captain R. returned to sleep on the steamer, and Hassan soon left us alone with our patient, who was still unconscious. The room was now quite dark, save where a faint ray of moonlight streamed through a small barred window on a rusty sword suspended to the wall, and two large jars, one of arsenic, the other of strychnine, on a shelf overhead. Inside nothing broke the stillness but the heavy breathing of K., as he moved from time to time uneasily on his couch. And outside there was only the low monotonous plash of the waves and the dismal howl of a hyena on the distant mainland. In fact, it was all depressing in the extreme, and we slept but little. At last slowly, like a reluctant school-boy going to his task, a faint greyish ray of light began to appear on the horizon, a solemn row of vultures, perched on a dead wall, commenced a hasty toilet; and we knew that the morning was near. Then, with sudden radiance, the sun rose over the hills; and the brightness of the eastern day replaced, as if by magic, the darkness of a minute before. My brother and I took a plunge in the sparkling waters of

the bay, and returned to K., who had now recovered consciousness, though he was still far from well.

In the course of the day we called on the French vice-consul, M. de Sarzec, the only representative of any European power at Massowah. He was most kind and gave us a much more cheering account of Abyssinia, in which country he had travelled as far as Adowa. It appeared that *he* also had been recommended a servant from Massowah by Hassan, but he had cause to regret having taken him, as the fellow turned out very badly and had twice tried to murder him when he was up the country. He therefore advised us strongly to keep the men we had brought from Cairo and to persevere in our journey; a course, I need hardly say, we had already decided to pursue. At the consul's feet lay a fine brindled hound, a native of the country, which always accompanied him on his shooting expeditions. Its shoulder had been ripped open by a leopard, who had nearly killed it, but still the brave dog's courage remained undaunted. M. de Sarzec told us that when he was at Ailet, a lion one evening walked right into the middle of the village, and carried off a woman who was lying asleep at the back of his house. The people on hearing her scream gave chase with lighted torches, and the lion dropped his prey at some distance from the village, where she was afterwards found quite dead with a large tuft of the lion's mane still clenched firmly in her hand. He also told us of a leopard who carried a goat off from a tent,

after first passing over the bodies of three or four men who were asleep in it, without waking them.

Abdil Effendi now sent to tell us that our apartments were ready; they consisted of two empty rooms over a sort of storehouse, making one side of a flat-roofed quadrangular building, with a court in the centre, the rest of which contained a hareem which had been left under the guardianship of Abdil Effendi during the absence of its lord and master, who had gone to Suakin. Here, from the windows that looked on the inner court, we could catch fleeting glimpses of bright eyes, fluttering white drapery, and dainty scarlet slippers, as the fair occupants flitted to and fro, past their latticed jalousies, or, wrapped in long *hábarahs*, sallied forth to walk in the town. The walls of our room, which *once* had been whitewashed, were adorned with the horns of defunct goats by way of pegs; and the floors were strewn with earth; dirt, dust, and cobwebs were everywhere, and people on entering generally began their conversation by a violent fit of sneezing. When we went to rest at night, rats ran riot over our feet, big spiders dropped down from the ceiling and made exploring expeditions into our hair, while long horned beetles got in between the coverlids, and bats flitted noiselessly about till morning; but it must not be supposed from all this that our apartment was altogether devoid of aristocratic pretensions. It was the "guest house" of the government; in it had lodged the Duke and Duchess of Coburg, Consul Cameron, Munzinger Bey, and last not least,

Aba Kassié, the robber chief, who had only just escaped from it. It appears that when his flight became known, the local government decided to make an example of *somebody*, and knowing that he must have had a boat to take him to the mainland, they collected the boatmen of Massowah, sixty in number, and gave them *all* a hundred and twenty strokes of the bastinado apiece, so as to be sure that at least *one* of the men who had helped him was punished. I may here mention that though Aba Kassié was a prisoner, he was also, strangely enough, a pensioner of the government, and received twenty dollars a month. It is even doubtful whether his escape was not connived at, such are the inscrutable ways of Eastern justice. Each day we were forced to pass in the stifling atmosphere of Massowah told on our health; but every time we went to the Effendi, to ask if he had procured camels for us, we were met by the same bland answer, *Bukkara inshállâh* (to-morrow if Allah is willing), till at last I lost all patience and told the Effendi that *inshállâh, inshsheitân,** he must either refuse to get us the camels at all, or else let us have them on the morrow. The next morning (February 19th) Captain R. and I were bathing in the bay, when we perceived a shoal of small fish jump right out of the water and come flying almost into our arms; fortunately we were not far from the shore, for the next moment the glistening white side and fin of a shark appeared above the wave not half-a-dozen yards behind us, causing us

* Sheitân, the Devil.

to abandon the water with nearly as much alacrity as the little fishes. I believe barracooters are also found in the bay. At midday Abdil Effendi paid us a visit in state. He came to say that our camels should be ready at four o'clock. As he was going out of the house, the old gentleman had to make a most ludicrous display of activity, for a cow that had been sent us, having broken loose, had constituted itself a sort of sentry over our doorway and viciously charged all who tried to go in or out. It is needless to say that its ire was particularly provoked by the apparition of the vice-governor's unwieldy and gorgeously-attired person. Had he been a reflective man, he might have learned but too justly to appreciate the devotion of his faithful followers, by marking the celerity with which they *all* beat a retreat in the hour of danger.

When we went to bid good-bye to the French consul he begged us to give the protection of our party to two French Franciscan friars, who were proceeding to the Catholic Mission in Shoa, and feared they might be waylaid by Aba Kassié on the road. Of course we gladly agreed to do so, but as the missionaries were not then ready to start, it was arranged that they should join us at the first halt.

A little before sunset we at last got all our men and baggage embarked on board a great native barge, which was to take us across to the mainland. The boatmen had to carry us ashore on their shoulders; but the man on whose back I was perched lost his footing, and was about to drop me into the water,

when I instinctively drove my heels into his naked flanks, as if he were a horse. This saved me, for, uttering a loud yell, he sprang forward and deposited me on terra firma with the utmost precipitation; indeed, in the excitement of the moment, I had quite forgotten that my boots were armed with hunting spurs.

Some mules, twelve camels, and an escort of irregular soldiers were awaiting us on the shore; but the camels were not enough to carry all our things, and we were therefore forced to abandon nearly five hundred-weight of biscuit at Massowah. At last everything was ready for the start, and we turned our faces inland, and bid adieu to civilization.

Then came a short ride through the darkness, over a flat, swampy country, till we arrived at the village of Moncullou, where we were to encamp for the night. The Sheik came to offer us some milk and melon-water sherbet, accompanied by his two sons, both remarkably handsome young Arabs. When their father had seated himself in our tent, my brother signed to them to do the same; but they still remained motionless, with their eyes fixed on the ground; and the dignified old Sheik hastened to explain that it was impossible they should dream of sitting in their father's presence,

> "For son of Moslim must expire
> Ere dare to sit before his sire."

We also had a visit from the Naib. This chief was to accompany us to Subaguma, at the foot of the

Abyssinian mountains, where we should have to change our camels for oxen, those animals alone being able to scale the rocky passes of Ethiopia. Moncullou is, for the most part, a collection of round thatched huts, enclosed by rough fences; behind the village, on the Abyssinian side, are two old Turkish cannon, in a sort of rude fort. Many of the merchants of Massowah live here to escape from the heat of the town; all the rest of the inhabitants are Shohos, and we could hear their monotonous music all night, as they kept some rude feast to the moon. But it was pleasant to know that we were at last clear of the "Harbour of the Shepherds" and its Abderitish * inhabitants, who, less fortunate than the people of Abdera, have never heard the Andromeda of Euripides, and learned to sing, "O Cupid, prince of gods and men." Perhaps it is the total absence of Cupid's gentle and ennobling influence in the East, that has made the Orientals what they are. If they had known the influence of woman as a companion and a friend, instead of only knowing her as a plaything and a slave, they might have been very different.

* See the story of Abdera in the "Sentimental Journey."

CHAPTER III.

THE FRONTIER OF ETHIOPIA.

February 20th.—We started early, sorely against the will of our camel drivers, for it was pouring with rain, and leaving the baggage in charge of the soldiers, —a set of bare-legged, hardy-looking fellows, armed to the teeth with knife, gun, and revolver—pushed forward on our mules, through a barren, mountainous country, dotted here and there with flowering mimosas. We presently came to the dry bed of a considerable river, where the tropical vegetation grew in wild luxuriance, and the hot, damp air was laden with perfume, like the interior of a greenhouse. From among the bushes the tiny *Beni Israèl* (a pretty species of gazelle) gazed at us with its large eyes, while overhead a family of brightly-plumaged birds, with long hooky beaks, sat billing and cooing most lovingly, looking like some strange Israelitish race of turtle-doves. When my brother shot one of them, her companion seemed quite broken-hearted, and flew round and round overhead, uttering a low and mournful cry. Further on, we entered a narrow mountain glen, bounded by mighty walls of black rock; and here our camp was pitched in an open space, where a water-

fall, now dwindled to a diminutive stream, fell over a lofty pile of grey boulders, and formed a natural bath in the silver sand below. A party of brown Shohos, marching noiselessly along in Indian file, armed with shield and spear, were the only other occupants of this wild spot. The tent was soon pitched, and our picturesque escort gathered round the camp fire to polish up their rusty arms. As night closed in, the mules and camels were secured close together, for fear of wild beasts; and the Naib retired, in solitary dignity, to a little tent he had erected under a mimosa tree.

We were in the saddle betimes next morning, and, marching in a northerly direction, reached the top of a wooded range of hills, from which we gained a view of the valley of Ailet, famous for the quantities of lions, elephants, giraffes, &c., with which it abounds. The valley immediately below us was green with fields of Indian corn, and herds of humped oxen and tiny African sheep, no bigger than English lambs, were grazing by the side of a dry watercourse. The Naib would willingly have encamped here, near a little Shoho village, called Dumbli; but as the place was full of musquitos and there was no food to be had, my brother and I decided to ride on to the higher camping ground of Subaguma, where there lived a Frenchman, who was employed by the Governor of Massowah to look after a saw-mill that had been erected there.

Leaving our baggage to follow, and taking an Arab soldier from the escort for our guide, we rode on through a jungle till our attention was attracted by

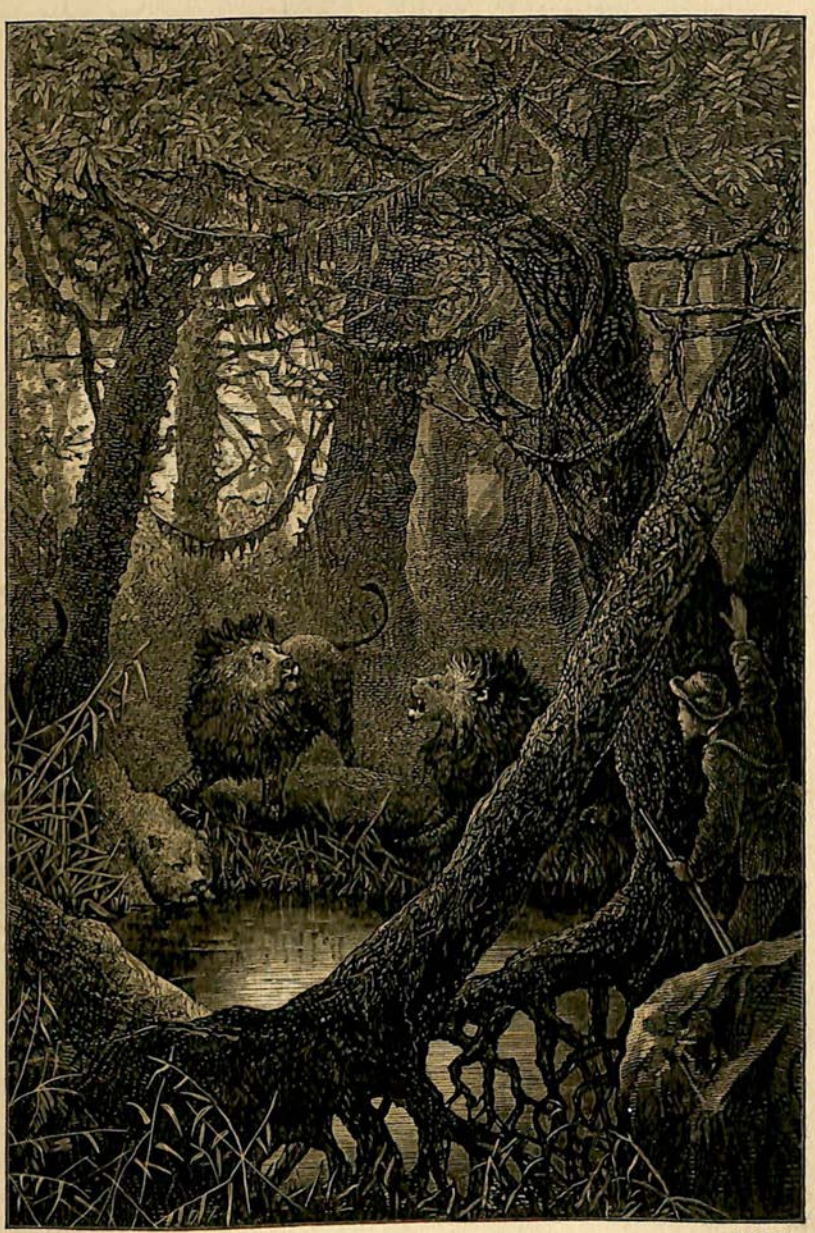
great numbers of wild guinea-fowl, who were pecking about among the long dry grass. As they afforded good sport, we dismounted and continued our way on foot. I ceased to hear the report of my brother's gun after a time, and sat down to wait for him; but still he did not appear, though presently the baggage camels came slowly plodding along. "*Fein el hawâgah?*" I cried to the drivers in Anglican Arabic; but they only pointed to the road behind them, and jabbered something I could not understand, so I shouldered my gun and turned back along the track. At last I found my brother lying on the ground half fainting; while the Naib and a soldier leant over him, in evident distress. His mule was a very vicious one, and had kicked him badly while he was getting some cartridges from his valise. Fortunately, we had brandy with us; and he recovered enough to mount a mule before the arrival of the stretcher I had sent for. Our servants, in the meanwhile, had pitched the tents at Subaguma.

On nearing the camping ground we saw a great commotion among the Shohos, and Captain R. with a drawn revolver in his hand. I galloped up, and found that our dragoman, Baulo, had tried to strike one of the natives with a large mallet, used for driving the tent pegs; and a serious collision might have occurred had not R. threatened to fire on the combatants. At sight of the pistol Baulo had bolted, and now stood trembling, with his arms meekly crossed, awaiting the punishment we should award him. How-

ever, I thought the fright he had received was enough for this time, and merely gave him a very stern warning that if he repeated such conduct he would get three hundred lashes; for not unfrequently the assassinations of travellers in uncivilised countries can be traced to some act of oppression on the part of their servants, as in the case of poor Powell.

The Frenchman in charge of the mill at Subaguma was away, but his wife, an Abyssinian woman, received us kindly, and sent us some of her native *tedge* (mead) to drink. The saw-mill where they lived stands alone in a valley, surrounded on all sides by thickly-wooded mountains, which at night ring with the cries of the hyenas and other wild beasts with which they are infested. Here we had to wait till we could get oxen to carry our baggage up the mountain passes which guard the entrance to Abyssinia.

The following morning (February 22nd), we were joined by one of the Franciscan missionaries who had been introduced to us by the French consul at Massowah. His name was Father Louis de Gonzague, and he had come forward alone, as his companion had determined not to undertake the journey. Among his servants were three lads from Shoa, who had been educated at a Franciscan convent at Marseilles. They were gentle, well-mannered boys; and in their neat white dresses and turn-down collars looked the very beau ideal of good niggers. Father Louis himself had nothing of the hard and withered look one expects to see in an African missionary. On the contrary, he was



THE THREE LIONS.

as stout and jovial as the holy friars of romance: let me add, that he was also most simple-minded, kind-hearted, good, and gentle.

We had hardly exchanged greetings when the clatter of horses' hoofs announced the return of the young Frenchman, whose wife we had already seen at the mill. He seemed fond of his Abyssinian bride, and to like much the backwoodsman's life he was leading. In the season there was plenty of game to be shot, and of course he had a lion story to tell us. He had gone out shooting wild pigs one day, with an old single-barrelled fowling-piece; and not finding any sport, had penetrated far into the forest, when towards sunset he came on some boar tracks which led him to a deep pool surrounded by rocks and big trees. On looking cautiously round one of these, he suddenly found himself face to face with three lions who were drinking the water. As he had only buck shot with him, it may be imagined that he retraced his steps again with the utmost rapidity and caution. At last he gained the open country, and was walking quietly along with his gun over his shoulder, whistling a tune, when he noticed two Shohos sitting under a tree, who the moment they caught sight of him flung their arms into the air and ran away as hard as they could. This conduct surprised him, and he glanced round to see what was the matter, when, lo and behold! there were the three lions following him, in a grave and dignified manner, at about thirty yards' distance. Luckily there was a village

near, the people of which, as he approached it, drove the lions away with their cries.

In the afternoon I wandered through the forest, which was very beautiful. A handsome Arab boy carried my cartridges; he was one of our escort, and must have been all his mother's child, from his large eyes, delicate features, and slender frame; but he marched behind me with an enormous brown bess on his shoulder, a sword at his side, and a revolver stuck in his belt, with a warlike air which clearly showed that his soul was above his size, and he considered himself the guardian of my safety.

In one of the thickest parts of the forest, where the interlacing boughs of the trees were laden with tropical creepers, and almost shut out the rays of the sun, we came on a party of natives, encamped at the foot of a great rock, near which a mountain stream leaped over the boulders into a deep black pool below. They never moved a muscle as we approached, but stood with their shields and spears at their sides like bronze statues, or one of the groups of savages at the Crystal Palace. Luckily they were able to guide us to the camp, for we had already lost our way in the intricacies of the forest. When we got back to Subaguma, I found C. nearly recovered from his accident. Most of the escort had been sent away to collect oxen for the march into Ethiopia. Mustafa had discovered a large scorpion under a stone in the tent; but this was a trifle, for these creatures abound here and in Abyssinia, where they attain an extraordinary size.

February 23rd.—Our baggage was ready at daybreak for the oxen, but the oxen were not forthcoming. The soldiers, it is true, had collected some of the owners of the beasts, but all they did was to look at the baggage and then squat down in a circle and talk to one another for four or five hours consecutively; some of them stood all the time on one leg, like storks, a position from which they seemed to derive great satisfaction.* Seeing no chance of a move, I went for a walk, and shot a black-crested eagle, a beautiful bird, with a handsome top-knot of long sable feathers standing upright from its head. Strangely enough, when I killed it, it had just swallowed a big rat entire, the tail of which was still hanging out of the bird's beak. The rat must have been actually alive when the eagle swallowed it, and, had I not seen it, I should not have believed that this small species of eagle could have disposed of so big a morsel without first tearing it to pieces. When I returned to the camp, the Shohos were still conversing as monotonously as ever, but they looked rather astonished when one of our soldiers, a gigantic negro from the White Nile, whose already ugly face was rendered still more hideous by the small-pox, took the eagle and began to devour it raw; however, that episode over, they continued their palaver as before, nor were there any signs of the oxen. It was not till sunset, and after we had paid

* There are many races in Africa who always stand on one leg, the knee of the other leg being generally bent, and the flat of the foot placed against the knee of the limb that is upright; when they are tired they change legs.

the drivers twice the usual price in advance, that the oxen began slowly to appear through the glades of the forest; and leaving the Naib, the camel drivers, and our escort, to return to Massowah, we started with our new companions for the Abyssinian frontier. Some of the oxen were wild, and kicked off their loads, smashing everything, and one with two boxes of loaded cartridges on his back, bolted into the bush, where we expected to hear him blow up every minute.

Winding through a lovely glen, where the way was blocked with great grey boulders, and trees of beautiful foliage made a natural arch overhead, we came to a river, after fording which we commenced the ascent of a tremendous hill, so steep that only one ox out of the twenty-two that started, remained in sight by the time we had got half-way up it. When we all reached the top, it was night, and we could see nothing but a lofty range of mountains before us, with a stormy starlit sky behind them, and a valley as dark as the infernal lake at our feet. *Facilis descensus Averni* — the way down was so steep that our cruppers gave way, and our saddles slipping forward, we soon found ourselves perched on the heads of our mules instead of on their backs, as was by nature intended. However, we at last caught sight of the cheering light of a fire, and encamped near a party of Abyssinian merchants, who were also going to halt in the valley for the night. Some of our oxen presently came in; but one, which was carrying a bullock-trunk with 500 dollars in it, broke down, and had to stay in the bush all night, fo

the Shohos said his back was broken, and the box too heavy for the men to carry. This was *not* comforting.

The next day, February 24th, Mustafa declared that a beast with "eyes like candle light," had been prowling round the mules all night, but our mules were accomplished kickers, and stood at night with their heads close together, presenting a circular front, or rather rear, of heels, that a braver animal than a hyena would hardly dare to face.

Our way now followed the course of a river, through the windings of a mountain glen, which called up memories of the valley of the Lynn in North Devon; for below us the river went dancing over the rocks into deep yellow pools, and above our heads the grey "tors" rose grandly from the green woods that clothed their sides, as in the beautiful West country; only here, the colours of the flowers were brighter, the shape and foliage of the trees more graceful and fantastic, the trailing creepers, which hung in fanciful festoons from bough to bough, more wild and luxuriant in their growth, the scent of the flowering shrubs more subtle, the hum of the insects louder, the wings of the butterflies more brilliant, and the plumage of the birds more gorgeous than they are at home. Even the water seemed to dance with a brighter sparkle over the white quartz rocks, for Nature looks her fairest under the glamour of a tropical sunshine. But the fairest rose has its thorn, and here the hot rays of the sun are often fatal to the white man; in the shady green valleys lurk fever and malaria; through the long grass

creep the cobra capella and the deadly horned viper; among the gaily humming insects the centipede and the tarantula hide their sting; beneath the glittering quartz stones lies the scorpion, ready to strike the hand that would displace it; the very scent of the flowers is often poisonous; while the bright berries growing by the way-side are death to any one who would be rash enough to taste them. Even the beautiful trees whose graceful foliage most attracts the eye, are here all armed with long thorns; while on the broad boughs of the African sycamore, whose grateful shade invites the traveller to stop and rest, too often crouches the spotted leopard, ready to drop down on the first unwary ox or mule that may pass beneath him. That the fairest rose is encircled by thorns, is a moral pervading every phase of nature in Africa; all her most beautiful treasures are similarly guarded, and he who would enjoy them runs the risk of being badly scratched.

At last quitting the glen, we emerged on a level green plateau, where a group of giant tree cactuses had a most singular effect, with their dark green branches spreading out like a fan, and often reaching a height of fifty or sixty feet. Most of them were in blossom, and at the end of each great prickly branch was a little yellow flower, which glistened in the sun like gold. We sat down to rest beneath one of these majestic trees, for the oxen were far behind. A lark was carolling high up in the air. Strangely enough, the skylark of East Africa sings the same

sweet notes we hear among our English corn-fields, though the other African birds have wild songs of their own that are unknown to us in our colder climes. But to the ear of the European the lark's song is the sweetest, for it reminds him of home.

Leaving the others to repose under the *kolqual* (tree cactus), I began the ascent of an exceedingly steep mountain-pass, nearly blocked by great masses of rock, over which my poor mule leaped and scrambled with the greatest difficulty. On either side the tangled bush was alive with francolin partridges and guinea-fowl, while scarlet parrots flew among the trees, and now and then I could hear the short sharp bark of a monkey, though none were visible. After more than an hour's hard work, I lay down to rest in a little grassy amphitheatre, from which, on looking back, I could see over the whole of the mountains through which we had been travelling, as they lay far below with the white clouds floating over their peaks. Presently I heard sounds of laughter, and a party of Abyssinian girls came by, clad, like Diana's nymphs, in short sleeveless tunics, looped over the left shoulder, so as to leave the right arm and breast uncovered. At sight of a European in a tweed shooting-dress and a sun helmet, they all came to a dead halt, and stared for some moments in mute astonishment; then, I suppose, finding my appearance really *too* frightful, they gave a loud shriek, and ran down the hill like a covey of frightened partridges. Father Louis now joined me, and we continued the ascent; his

mule was so dead beat that he was forced to walk, and yet we seemed only half way up, and the mountain ever became steeper and steeper. Most hills, like the ambition of man, appear to grow higher the further one ascends them; but, unlike his ambition, their summit is generally attainable in the end. At last we gained the top of the pass, and though we were faint and weary with what seemed a perfectly interminable climb, the magnificent view that burst upon us was a sufficient reward for our labour. As far as the eye could reach, we saw the uplands of Abyssinia stretching before us in endless ranges of wooded mountains, while the clouds floated far below our feet, over emerald valleys watered by glittering streams. To the far south were the great table-lands of Akele-gusai, towering high above the loftiest mountains, like a purple wall; while in the foreground, the dark green forests of tree cactuses, with the sunlight playing on their yellow flowers, made the nearer mountains look as if they had been powdered with gold.

Descending a path almost as steep and rugged as that we had lately ascended, we at length reached a shady spot where some green cresses grew most invitingly in a pool of clear water. An Abyssinian *shoum*,* who was passing, politely drew a long curved sword from a scarlet leather sheath, and offered it us to cut them with, so we refreshed our parched lips, which had suffered severely from the heat, as it was many hours since we had tasted any water. Not

* Chief.

one of our men or oxen was yet in sight, but it was impossible for us to halt here, as there was not room to pitch the tents or picket the beasts, and we were forced to accomplish the ascent and descent of another formidable hill before we finally reached a camping-ground called Maihenzi, on the banks of a small stream which ran through a wooded valley.

There was a great cackling of guinea-fowl in the bush, and C. and I went to shoot some for supper. When we returned, one of the tents had arrived, but alas! there were no tent-pegs, and we were obliged to set it up imperfectly with stones. Though the sun had been so hot during the day, owing to the elevation we were at it was bitterly cold when night set in; the wind whistled through our insecure tent with icy chillness, and we were soon forced to pile our waterproofs, carpets, camel-saddles, trunks, in short everything we could lay hold of, in an indiscriminate heap over our blankets, to keep any warmth in us at all. There is no hour of the night so chill as the hour before day-break. Unable to bear the cold any longer, I left the tent, and clambered up towards the genial warmth of the morning sun, which was just beginning to gild the tops of the surrounding mountains. The little valley below me was still dark and silent, and I now noticed with astonishment that it seemed to have no other outlet than the way by which we had entered. All around it was walled in by steep hills covered with bush, nor was there any trace of a cleft or ravine which the road could follow, and yet road I knew there *must*

be, as this was the highway to Adowa, the capital of Tigre. I afterwards found that most of the tracks in Abyssinia went straight across mountain and valley, generally crossing the highest part of the mountain, and the lowest part of the corresponding valley, without any regard to the natural advantages offered by the ground. Real roads there are scarcely any, and the merchants, who always follow a given track, generally travel on foot, and seem to consider it as simple to go straight up and down a mountain as to make a circuit round its base.

As the sun rose higher and the valley was flooded with light, the woods rang with the joyous carolling of birds, the lowing of oxen, and the shouts of our people striking the tent and preparing for the start. I returned to the camp and learned that K. and R. had ridden ahead. C. was in the bush shooting something for breakfast, so I fired the big elephant rifle as a signal, and was rewarded by an echo, which was tossed from mountain to mountain for a length of time that would have rivalled any of the famous echoes of the Bernese Oberland; but I fear that the Shohos did not appreciate it as it deserved, for they stopped their ears and shut their eyes when they saw my finger on the trigger; I myself was nearly knocked down, for the rifle was rusty, and with eight drachms of powder in it had a habit of kicking, like Alexandre Dumas' wonderful Spanish *trabuco*, which used to spin him round like a top at every discharge.

Climbing with difficulty up one of the sides of the valley, we reached a level table-land, extending as far

as the eye could see, with little to vary its monotony save here and there a low line of hills, dotted with stunted trees and myrtle bushes. Further on we came to the village of Asmara, a collection of stone hovels perched on an isolated sandhill; round it, however, lay a green prairie, watered by little rivulets, which collected into several big pools. Near one of these our tents were pitched, and the cattle turned loose to enjoy the fresh herbage. Of late the poor beasts had had little to eat save such scanty sustenance as could be gathered from the mountain-side. It was not long before we saw some wild geese walking among them as tamely as their domesticated brethren of the farm-yard, but after one or two had been shot they grew more shy. A walk among the sand hills secured us also some specimens of the African hare, a small variety looking more like a long-legged rabbit than anything else, but which proved a decided addition to our cuisine. Bruce relates that he was afraid to eat hares in Abyssinia because the natives considered them unclean; but in this, as well as in one or two other cases, I think he rather overrated the dangers that surrounded him, for all the time we were in the country we continued to eat hares, geese, wild ducks, &c., and though the natives sometimes appeared astonished, they never showed the slightest objection to *our* eating them, so long as we did not ask *them* to partake of what they considered unclean food.

Our mules and oxen had now to be dismissed, as we had only been able to engage them to come thus far,

and we were therefore condemned to remain at Asmara till we could get others. Some merchants travelling from the interior told us, among other news, that the King of Abyssinia had left Adowa with his army, to pursue the conquest of Western Ethiopia. This was a great disappointment, as we had hoped to procure men from him to accompany us on our shooting expedition to the Takazze. General K., however, kindly wrote a letter to Ras Bariaü, the chief, who had been appointed *Ras*, or Viceroy of Tigre, by the King, asking him to send people to meet us, as it seemed unlikely we should be able to get fresh cattle at Asmara. To add to our misfortunes, when dinner time arrived, my brother's servant, Baulo—who acted as our "major domo," was missing, and instead of his magnificent bow and announcement—"*Signore Barone, il pranzo è servito*," only Mustafa appeared to say that "Baulo him very bad with de fever, him think he dying." True enough we found him rolled up in his blankets, shivering like an aspen leaf, and groaning horribly, but a very long way from dying, and a strong dose of ipecacuanha followed by others of Epsom salts and quinine, did not much add to his cheerfulness at the *time*. However, he felt the benefit of them next day.

We were now fairly across the frontier of Ethiopia, and in the dominions of Yohannes, King of Abyssinia. I am aware that, geographically speaking, Ethiopia extends far into the unknown heart of Africa; but as Bible commentators are accustomed to place Ethiopia on the confines of Nubia, as the Abyssinians

themselves call their country the Empire of Ethiopia, and as many authors writing before me have given it that name, for convenience sake I shall follow the common practice, and use the names Ethiopia and Abyssinia as synonymous.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROAD TO ADOWA.

ASMARA proved no unpleasant spot to tarry in: all day long the glorious eastern sun blazed down upon it from a cloudless sky, and yet the air was ever as fresh and bracing as it is on an Alpine pass, for the great tableland on which we were camped was nearly eight thousand feet above the level of the sea. At night the Southern Cross and many other beautiful constellations shone with a lustre only known in the tropics, and the southern hemisphere is, to my mind, richer in beautiful stars than our northern one. With the sunset came quantities of wild geese, ducks, teal, widgeon, and doves to drink at the pond not fifty yards from our tent, while the sand hills furnished plenty of hares when we wanted game. Indeed we had to live principally on the produce of our guns, as the village of Asmara was almost deserted, and the plains round it depopulated, for, being so near the frontier, they had been exposed to the ravages of the Egyptian soldiers sent to conquer Bogos, who had made many pillaging expeditions up here, and caused most of the inhabitants to fly into the interior of the country for safety.

On the highest point of a rocky eminence near our

camp stood two lofty cedar trees, whose thick dark foliage afforded a refreshing shade on the hottest day; here, when no breath of air could be felt elsewhere, there was always a breeze, and many hours have I passed cradled on their great boughs, reading the scanty stock of books we had with us. Strange birds would often perch overhead, and though from this point one could see in every direction, few of the natives ever disturbed its solitude. I once left a gold watch hanging on a branch, and for two days did not remember where I had put it, but when I returned to the cedars I found it just where it had been left. Often as I sat beneath those old trees has my truant mind flown swiftly home, leaping lightly over thousands of miles of mountain deserts and sea, and guiding my hand to cut two initials —not my own—deep in the dark cedar wood, which will probably long remain to astonish the Abyssinian shepherds who cross those wilds.

On Sundays, Father Louis held a service in his little tent; Baulo used to go to it, but Mustafa, being a Mahomedan, of course kept himself to himself, though I never saw him pray; in fact, he was rather at a disadvantage, for the Abyssinians have about as much love for an Egyptian as the Turks used to have for a Christian or a Jew. We had determined to avoid shooting on Sundays, but when Mustafa one day—just as we felt very ready for dinner—announced that there was no dinner to cook, all our moral fortitude gave way and a brace of hares were very soon stewing in the *pot-au-feu*. However, the game was already getting

wild, and our walks in search of breakfast and dinner became longer and longer; our appetites also increased in proportion to our walks, which was unfortunate. At last a day came when K. had to go up to the village church and shoot the wild pigeons which lived under the thatch, as nothing else was to be had. I must here explain that the village churches in Abyssinia are generally little round houses, built of mud or stones, with tall conical thatched roofs, the projecting eaves of which are supported by a rude colonnade formed by the trunks of trees: under these eaves live doves, wild pigeons, and sometimes even monkeys.

It was very curious when the first shades of evening closed in, to hear the low whistling cry of the jackals all round our tents, coming as it were out of space, for not one of the little animals was ever to be seen. We could often hear them crunching the bones, which had been taken out from dinner, close to the tent; but whenever we looked out not a jackal was in sight. When at a later hour, the laughing hyenas came prowling round, the jackals were silent, and with the first rays of daylight they returned to their holes among the long grass and rocks, and rarely ventured abroad. If by any chance an old and hardy one *did* appear, he behaved very much like an English fox, that is, if seen he would trot quietly off till he was just out of range of a gun, when he would stand quite still and grin pleasantly, as if he had no idea of avoiding human society, but on the contrary rather liked it. If he found himself still followed he would sidle off very quietly, stopping

every now and then till he was just within shot, and at last, when by a repetition of these tactics he had beguiled you into following him for about a mile and a half over a stony country, he would grin more blandly than ever, and, whisking his brush in the air, gallop out of sight in a moment.

We had now been at Asmara a week, but with the exception of a few half-naked natives, drawn thither by curiosity, no one had come near our camp, and no message had arrived in reply to K.'s letter to Ras Bariaü; we, therefore, determined to get what means of transport we could from the village; but this was easier said than done. Being a frontier race, the Asmarians, whenever they committed a crime, were accustomed to escape punishment by crossing into the Egyptian territory, and none of them had a good enough conscience to be willing to venture with their oxen into another province where they might be seized by some chief whom they had offended. It seemed there was a blood feud between Asmara and the next village, so they held no intercourse, and no one dared to go there for love or money, as the feud—after the usual manner of those amiable institutions—could only be brought to an end by the shedding of more blood. The people of this country also firmly believed that all foreigners were Turks, an illusion which in our case was enhanced by the Moorish dresses of our servants, and as they had been much pillaged by Egyptian soldiers, they would neither help us to procure food nor transport, and they even frightened the people of other villages

from assisting us. In vain Father Louis tried persuasion and assured them he was anything but a Turk; as useless were our offers of high pay, or threats to use force. We were now without meat, and K. and I were obliged to march up to the village with a servant and make him carry a sheep off bodily on his back, before we could get any, and though we gave the owner three times its value, the people were very menacing.

At last, on March 5th, we succeeded in getting some of the natives of a neighbouring village, which had no blood feud on hand at that moment, to hire us their oxen and some mules, as far as Guddofelassie, a town three days' march from Adowa, but it was not till they had made Father Louis swear, in his sacred capacity, that they should be allowed to return from thence uninjured, that we could get them to produce their cattle. A peaceable understanding being now arrived at, the whole population of Asmara crowded down to look at us and see us start, the oxen drivers squatting in a circle meanwhile, and drawing lots with their staves for the baggage they were to take charge of. Most of their oxen were quite unused to carrying loads, and charged about like *toros de plaza*, to the great consternation of Baulo, whose baggy yellow *serwal** were once or twice in imminent danger, as their bright colour particularly infuriated the unruly beasts.

At last we were off, riding first S.S.W. across the grassy plains, and then through wooded hills sweet with the scent of the mimosa and other aromatic trees. At

* Loose Turkish trowsers.

a bend in the road we suddenly espied a large party of natives approaching us, clad in scarlet and white *kuaries* (blankets), and brandishing their shields and spears in the air. They advanced with a rude dancing step, every now and then making a feint as if they were about to cast their spears, and giving vent to a yell which would have done credit to spirits let loose from Pandemonium, while to increase the noise a party of men, marching before them, blew discordant notes on long wooden trumpets, very like the Swiss mountain horns. Each of Father Louis's black servants carried a long double-barrelled gun, for they had a most wholesome dread of meeting Aba Kassié, and when they saw the glancing spears of the warlike band that was now approaching, and heard them yell, they thought the fatal moment had arrived, and stopping short, full-cocked both barrels, shut their eyes, and prepared to die in defence of their master. Poor kind-hearted Father Louis! I believe he *was* made a prisoner afterwards, but not by Aba Kassié, whose tragical history I shall have to relate presently. Meanwhile K. had ridden forwards and been greeted by an old man, dressed in a robe of silk, and mounted on a splendidly caparisoned mule, who at once descended and came to kiss his hand. He said he was going with a wedding party to fetch a bride for his son, who was to be married that night, so we wished the dusky lovers good speed and continued our journey. At sunset we halted in an open glade of the forest; the sky was one blaze of gold, which was reflected back by the light green

foliage of the bush, and in the far distance a purple line of fantastically shaped mountains bounded the horizon.

Next morning (March 6th), one of our drivers tried to slip away, but the sight of a revolver soon brought him back to his post. We forded a small stream flowing S.S.W., our own course being now W.S.W. The table land we were traversing sloped gently upwards to the top of a rocky ridge, which ended abruptly in a steep descent leading to another plain some 500 feet below; this plain was bounded, in the distance, by a fine range of mountains.

Leading our mules down a very precipitous path, we halted at a little spring embowered by trees, from which hung gay festoons of scarlet flowers. I noticed that two or three different kinds of flowers often bloomed on the same tree, like the oranges and lemons which are to be seen growing on the same stem in the groves of Massa, near Naples; but in Abyssinia the grafting is of course naturally performed by the birds.

A few hours later we arrived at the head of the Mareb, afterwards a considerable river, which flows down to Kassala, and finally loses itself in the desert sands of the Soudan. Here, it was but a baby brook running through a pretty glen it had cut for itself in the rock, and was a favourite haunt of the beautiful speckled Abyssinian kingfisher, and of a species of water rat which built its nest in the bushes by the stream At the opposite side of the ford stood a great tree, I believe of the fig kind, which by its gigantic growth

must have been many centuries old; within its heart a house might well have been built, as in the famous Spanish chestnut on Mount Etna, and though a sharp tropical shower was falling, all our party, both men and beasts, found shelter beneath its spreading boughs. Probably this was the same memorable "Daroo tree"* under which the traveller Bruce, more than a hundred years before, spent what he says was the first night where he enjoyed any tranquillity of mind since leaving Massowah.

Above the glen was the little village of Dibaroa, and presently a merry party of Abyssinian girls came running down from it to fill their water jars at the river, and steal a look at the camp of the white strangers. They were lithesome, graceful creatures, of a clear dark brown colour, and looked very picturesque in their short kirtles, and spotted leopard skins, adorned with blue beads and cowrie shells, looped over their left shoulder, and their black hair gathered up into a classical knot at the back of the head. We were struck here, as everywhere in Abyssinia, by the great similarity the country girls bear in dress and form to the figures of nymphs one sees carved on Greek and Roman bas-reliefs. I believe maidens in Abyssinia are supposed to keep the right breast uncovered, to show that they have never suckled a child, but women of rank, and those who live in the towns, are often elaborately dressed in robes of a somewhat Byzantine fashion, and of course no longer look like antique nymphs, though

* Daroo or dahroo, *Ficus religiosa.*

many of them have most classically shaped heads and features. Some of the men also are singularly handsome, and have nothing of the coarseness of feature we are accustomed to associate with the Ethiopic type, nor yet of the hard curved profile which distinguishes many of the Arab tribes. I have known some of them whom Phidias might have copied faithfully without departing in the least from the most rigid rules of Greek beauty, and strangely enough their hands and feet are very small and delicately proportioned, though they always go barefoot, and are accustomed to walk great distances over a rugged and difficult country. In Italy it is quite the reverse; for there, the lower classes who go barefoot—though often handsome in face and form—have always large flat feet, almost square at the toes, and even the celebrated girls of Ana Capri, though justly famous for their beauty, are no exception to this rule.

Probably the small feet and hands of the Abyssinians are a mark of an Asiatic origin,* for the *black* races indigenous to Nubia and the White Nile have the

* Though these characteristics *may*, in Abyssinia, be traceable to an Asiatic origin, I do not mean to infer that they are *necessarily* the result of one. The late Dr. Livingstone has described the natives of Manyuema—the reputed cannibals—as having many of the characteristics I have mentioned in the Abyssinians. In a letter, dated Manyuema country, October, 1869, addressed to Sir Bartle Frere, the great traveller says, "Here many have finely-shaped heads, straight or aquiline thin noses and thin lips, magnificent forms, with small feet and hands, graceful limbs; and barn-door mouths, prognathous jaws, and lark-heels are never seen." These people are also of a brown colour.

usual thick lips and large feet characteristic of the true Negro.

I noticed that blue beads were in fashion among the girls of Dibaroa, whose necks, arms, and ankles were prettily adorned with them. They were in fashion in this country a century ago,* and yet the village maidens were still content to wear them. This gave me a very flattering opinion of these young ladies, for they were but daughters of Eve, and surely some crafty trader must have assailed the vanity of some one of them to try to induce her to cut out her fair sisters by the purchase of a string of the gaudy red and yellow beads of Cairo or Jiddah, yet had they not *all* shown the good taste to remain faithful to the charming *bleu de Nile*, which contrasts so prettily with a dark brown skin.

Which of our English beauties would show as much constancy under a similar temptation?

The river near our tents unfortunately proved to be a favourite resort for large frogs, who, notwithstanding that—like the old French seigneurs—we had the water whipped to keep them quiet, continued to croak all night with a persevering vigour which, though it might have brought delightful visions to the mind of a Parisian gourmand, sadly disturbed our sleep.

March 7th.—Riding up out of the glen through the village of Dibaroa, where the whole population had collected to look at us, past the little round church secluded in its grove of quaint cactus trees, and out on

* See Bruce's Travels.

the open tableland where two great Marabout storks were gravely stalking about, we came in sight of a round hill, called Mersellim, on which it is said the kings of Hamasen used to be crowned. Then we rode in a westerly direction across a prairie of long grass, under a dreadfully hot sun, till we at last reached a little village called Toramni, where we made our first acquaintance with *tella*—Abyssinian beer—a beverage concocted by mixing *tef*—native bread—with water, which is then shut up in earthen jars to ferment. It looks and tastes very like dirty ditch water, a drink I had more than once to resort to during my travels. The Abyssinians, however, appreciate their *tella* highly, and literally drink it by the gallon, for its intoxicating powers are very limited, and I believe it is not unwholesome, though I always infinitely preferred pure water when we could get it.

Leaving the village of Toramni, we passed to the left of Abamatea, a lofty mountain which our guides told us was once an active volcano, and I see that on Von Heuglin's map of Abyssinia there is a crater marked in this neighbourhood, but from my brother's subsequent observations of Abamatea, and the peculiar lateral character of its stratification, it seems probable that it never can have been a crater, though there are certainly signs of volcanic action in this part of the country, and the natives appear to have traditions of eruptions.

C. and I were riding through some mimosa woods, a little in advance of our party, when our attention

was attracted to what appeared to be two very old men with long grey beards sitting on a stone by the wayside. When we arrived within a few yards of them they rose up, and we then saw that they were adorned with tails, being, in fact, a couple of great dog-faced baboons—the hideous, misshapen *Hamadryadus Cynocephalus* which is so common in this part of Africa. Finding that we followed them, they trotted slowly into the bush, where they were soon joined by nearly a hundred of their species, besides a great number of small dark grey monkeys, who seemed to be their humble admirers and imitators, playing the Boswell to their Johnson. On reaching the side of a hill, about twenty-five yards off, they halted and faced us in a sort of battle array, barking and making a great noise. Some of the dog-faces were of very large size, with shaggy grey manes like a lion, and stood nearly as high as a man, to whom they bore a painfully grotesque resemblance. As we continued to advance they slowly retreated, and finally disappeared over the top of the hill. When next we came on them they had reached the other side of a deep narrow gully cut by a mountain stream, and, evidently thinking they were safe from attack, had seated themselves in a row to see us pass. K. fired among them, and one of the biggest dog-faces uttered a loud scream, and began licking his foot; but his companions crowded round him, and carried him off before we could cross the gully, on the other side of which we found traces of blood, but saw no more of the baboons. I have noticed that they almost always

help their companions from the field when they are only wounded, and though they generally are afraid of a white man, I have heard of their entering into regular fights with the natives. They are exceedingly strong, and their long sinewy arms and powerful jaws render them dangerous adversaries. As a rule they go in parties, and if one turns on a man the whole herd attack him, and no power on earth can save his life. I have even heard of leopards, who have ventured to carry off their young, being attacked by the male baboons, who have torn them to pieces in their fury. The story that the baboon makes a flat nest in a tree, and when it rains sits on the top of it with its hands over its head, instead of seeking shelter beneath, is not typical of the usual character of these animals, for they are mostly very ingenious. I remember Baron de Schroeter telling me that when he was travelling through some forests on the West Coast of Africa, he came to a conical hut, about four feet high, built of branches regularly interlaced, the opening of which was so small that a man could only put his head into it; and when he asked what could be the use of such a hut, the natives told him that it was built by the monkeys, who lived in these kind of houses. I believe it has long been a disputed question whether monkeys *ever* construct houses, but I have every reason to suppose this information was correct. I remember another curious anecdote apropos of the West African monkeys, which I may as well mention here. On the sea coast of the West of Africa many of the trees dip

into the water, and at low tide great numbers of oysters are to be seen hanging to their branches. The monkeys who live in the woods come down in troops to collect these oysters, but though my friend often saw them carrying off great piles of oysters in their arms, he never could get sight of a monkey eating one. At last, however, he discovered an open place, in a secluded part of the forest, where the whole ground was thickly strewn with shells, and by watching it he found that the monkeys were in the habit of congregating there to eat their oysters in company. They generally began by nibbling a little hole at the edge of the oyster, into which they inserted their two thumbs, and then dexterously forced it open, usually concluding the operation by flinging the empty shells at the head of another monkey, for no sort of harmony prevailed at these feasts, which were very noisy and disorderly, as the monkeys would persist in stealing from one another's hoards.

The dog-faces of Abyssinia are most clever in robbing the corn-fields. When the grain begins to get ripe, they send out some of their number as scouts and sentries, while the others systematically collect the grain, which they stow away in their cheeks if suddenly alarmed. They also are fond of collecting berries and gum-arabic from the mimosa trees, which are plentiful in Abyssinia and the Soudan. A little red-haired monkey, which I took with me on my homeward journey, thought nothing so great a luxury as a fat locust or grasshopper, which he would tear limb from limb,

and crunch up with the gusto of a *bon-vivant* eating an ortolan; and afterwards, when I had him on my *dahabeah,* or Nile boat, he used to tremble with excitement at the sight of even a cockroach, and whine piteously till I would let him go and catch it. These little monkeys are, therefore, to a certain extent carnivorous in their tastes. I do not think they follow the big monkeys entirely through love, though the old baboons show them a good deal of the sort of love of the father who wishes not to spoil his child, cuffing them freely whenever they make too much noise. *En revanche,* the small monkeys seem always to be watching for an opportunity of teazing the big ones, their hearts being evidently full of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Whenever a big baboon goes quietly to sleep, a little monkey is sure to creep noiselessly up to him, and bite the tip of his tail, or pull his whiskers, and when the old dog-face awakes with a growl, and tries to get hold of him, his small tormentor springs lightly on the outer branches of some slender tree that will not bear the baboon's weight, and chatters at him derisively.

After a vain search for the wounded baboon we encamped near the head of the gulley. At sunset it swarmed with guinea-fowl, which, being unused to the sight of man, had not yet learned to fear his destructive propensities, and crowded down as boldly to drink at the stream as if they were farmyard fowls.

Opposite causes often produce the same results. I noticed that many birds in the secluded parts of the

African forests are almost tame, through their ignorance of man and his destructive powers ; but they soon learn that

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,"

though by rendering them still more familiar with man, they can be made tame again. Perhaps it is fortunate the thinking powers of animals are limited, for if they could reason they would trust man *less* the *more* they knew of him. The kindness of the master to the obedient or useful slave is but a poor compensation for freedom.

We saw flying among the bushes numbers of small birds, about the size of thrushes, with dark green plumage, which gleamed like enamel in the sunlight. In the evening we shot a brace of grouse, that proved very delicate food, and as much resembled a cross between a grouse and a partridge as the Abyssinian hare resembles one between a hare and a rabbit.

The moon was very bright, and our native followers made a great noise, singing rude choruses to it, and dancing a wild sort of *Carmagnole*, which for savage energy would have done credit to a cannibal feast. I fancy poor Baulo thought his last moment had come, for perceiving that his nerves were rather shaken, they formed a circle, and danced and leaped round him with the most awful whoops and yells, till, unable to bear the din any longer, we charged out of the tent with our riding-whips, and delivered the terrified dragoman from his tormentors. Baulo's experience of life and character had been chiefly confined to a barber's shop in Jerusalem,

and journeys with Cook's excursionists through the Holy Land; happy excursions, to which his memory fondly clung, and he earnestly believed, no doubt justly, that Mr. Cook was the best of men, and Mr. Gaze, in whose service he had also been, the next. He fondly supposed, also, that he could speak all languages, but here, alas! he was dumb; and he used to weep bitterly every morning, as we started on the march, which he knew took him farther and farther from his beloved Syria into the unknown wilds of Ethiopia—a wretched country, unexcursionised by Cook, and therefore, to Baulo's mind, beyond the limits of the known world; but soon he had even more cause to weep, for his boots wore out as the roads became more rocky, his back was blistered all over by the burning sun, a couple of dry biscuits were often the only food to be had, and the intermittent fever he had caught at Massowah, stuck to him like grim care to the horseman's back. However, there is no cloud but has a silver lining. When he returned from this journey he was a strong, hardy-looking fellow, who could talk to the natives in their own language, and instead of watering the way with his tears, used to order the shoums and chiefs about with as much assurance as if he had a hundred Janizaries at his back. Mustafa did not cry, but he could not speak a word of Abyssinian, so for the present all the interpretation had to be done by Tedla, the General's native servant, who had been with him to Alexandria, and learned some little English and Arabic.

CHAPTER V.

WE ABANDON HALF OUR BAGGAGE.

March 8th.—After a three hours' ride we reached Guddofelassie, a large village situated in the midst of an extensive plain. The houses were little round huts built of loose stones, with low doors, no windows, and pointed thatched roofs, as usual. To the left of the village stood a great tree, where the market was held, and under it we encamped, although at some distance from the water, as its branches afforded us a shelter from the burning rays of the sun. It was not long before the *shoum*, or chief of the village, came to offer us a present of *tedge* (mead), which he brought in glass bottles carefully encased in wicker-work, for bottles are precious things in Africa.

When an Abyssinian servant offers his master tedge, he makes a cup of his two hands, and expects to have some of it poured into them for him to drink; this is his perquisite, and it also serves as a guarantee that the liquor has not been poisoned. The same custom prevailed in Europe in the middle ages, when every nobleman had his "taster," only the Abyssinian drinks out of his hands, as he does not know the art of poisoning the edge of a cup, and it would be considered

highly disrespectful for a slave to touch his master's drinking horn with his lips.

Of course there was a large crowd squatted outside the tents watching all our movements; when they saw us cleaning our rifles several of them ran off and brought us a very heterogeneous collection of old Portuguese match-locks, and superannuated Turkish guns, which they modestly requested us to put in order for them. An old woman came and begged for some medicine; my brother gave it her, and immediately the whole population of the place appeared to have been seized with sickness, by the desire they all evinced to be physicked. One person, who seemed to be a leper, even sent to say he was ready to give us cows sheep, or silver, if we would only visit him. In the afternoon a man brought a rather pretty little dun-coloured horse for sale. Its bridle had a severe ring-bit, like that used by the Arabs: the saddle was made of two pieces of wood, with a space between them for the back-bone of the horse, bound together at the pommel and cantel, which were quite upright and nearly ten inches high; while the stirrups were little round rings of iron only intended to admit the big toe. The horse was so frightened at our European dress that it would not let us approach, still less mount on its back; however, my brother was so pleased with its action, that he bought it, saddle, bridle and all, for twenty dollars (about 4*l.*), and had it tied up to the tree in front of our tents to accustom it to our strange appearance.

March 9th (Sunday).—The shoum came to tell us that he was starting that evening for Adowa ; we therefore entrusted him with some of our heavy boxes, containing cartridges and dollars, to take on with him, as we found that we should be unable to hire any fresh oxen at Guddofelassie to carry our heavy baggage. K. told us we need not be afraid of our things being stolen, as the shoum was responsible for his people, and in Abyssinia thieves are punished by having their right hand and left foot cut off, an operation which, as the chiefs say, with much *naïveté*, generally incapacitates them from repeating the offence. Of course this law is a very severe one, but it is necessary in so wild a country, where such civilized institutions as iron safes and police constables have never been heard of, and there would be no security against theft were it not for the terrible penalties attached to it ; however, just as in Europe, the man who speculates with other people's thousands is far safer than he who robs only a shilling ; so in Abyssinia open robbery is often practised without any punishment being attached to it ; for instance, if a soldier whose *kuarie* (blanket) is old and thread-bare meets an *unarmed* man whose kuarie is new and good, he calmly strips the unarmed man of his new blanket, and considers himself quite justified in doing so, because he is the stronger. On the same principle a chief will claim the goods of his inferior as a right, his only idea of *meum* and *tuum* being the universal law of nature that the stronger shall prey upon the weaker. The European traveller, however,

has little to fear, for the fact that he is a white man, and generally well armed, makes him by far the stronger in the estimation of the natives, who, not knowing the extent of his power, generally regard him with a sort of indefinite awe. Tact and resolution will enable him, therefore—as in the case of Sir Samuel Baker—to travel uninjured through those countries where no reliance whatever can be placed on the good faith of the natives.

On Monday, the 10th, we collected with great difficulty about forty porters, who immediately caught up the lightest loads and ran off with them on their heads, leaving us no means of transporting the heavier baggage. As the shoum was away there was no one of authority in the village. We could find no more porters, and were at last forced to leave thirteen packages behind us, many of which contained almost necessary things—such as our iron beds, flour, candles, rice, &c. C. succeeded in mounting his new horse, which, once he was on its back, went quietly enough, and afterwards proved itself remarkably sure-footed. The owner of my mule, who had promised to hire it to me as far as Adowa, now wanted to take it away, and tried to hide it in the village; however, arguing that *necessitas non habet legem*, I gave him a thrashing, after which he became more amiable. Crossing the stream, where a pretty group of girls had driven some curious humped Abyssinian cows to drink, we passed the village of Egerodali, and after riding for nearly an hour along a track so thickly strewn with loose stones that even our

mules could scarcely keep their footing, we reached another village called Emnahayella. Here we found the porters who had been so nimble in carrying off our light baggage, halted for the night; however, as we had only marched an hour and three-quarters, we shouted to them to *hedow* and *telaü* (go on and be quick), so they reluctantly resumed their loads and marched forwards. We had now an almost perpendicular hill to descend, and the dark gaunt figures of the forty porters, like the forty thieves, with their loads on their heads, as they went down the ladder-like descent in a long line which reached from top to bottom, presented a most curious silhouette against the afternoon sky.

In the plain below there was scarcely any vegetation, and the soft damp soil was everywhere stained blue with some mineral substance; a small stream that ran through it was said to be poisonous, and our cattle would not touch it. At sunset we reached a hill with a small village on the top, the name of which has escaped me. All its population were assembled at a funeral, and were standing in a circle near the church, round a grave over which an old priest, in a big white turban, was reciting some of the Psalms of David in Geez. We were therefore left unmolested to encamp by the river, but when our servants went to collect some wood, the villagers were only kept from falling upon them and beating them, by the sight of our rifles. Many of our porters were still behind, and as the baggage of Father Louis, K., and R. had not arrived, we all slept in one tent.

Next morning, to our dismay, we saw the six heavy boxes we had confided to the care of the shoum of Guddofelassie, lying deserted by the roadside, the porters having evidently run away and abandoned them there; nor were we able to remedy this misfortune, as we had only enough men with us to carry what we wanted for immediate use, and no more porters were to be found, for the male population of the villages in Abyssinia have a mysterious knack of vanishing whenever there is a question of hiring them to carry a heavy weight. The boxes lay scattered about just as they had been thrown down; some contained instruments, others our cherished supply of ammunition, and in one of mine was nearly 500 dollars in silver—money is a heavy thing to transport in Abyssinia, where the only coin that passes is the great Maria Teresa dollar of 1780—but we had to abandon all these treasures by the roadside, and ride on our way. The country now became bare and rocky. Five hours' painful marching brought us to a deep ravine, in the bottom of which ran a river. Far up the opposite side there stood a solitary hut, embowered in trees, where dwelt a fortune-teller, said to be more than a hundred years old, and of such repute that even the King had been to consult him. After bathing our cattle in the river, we emerged again on the plain which continued on the other side of the ravine. To our right was a large village called Huali, but we did not visit it. The sun was fearfully hot now, and my mule very tired; in fact he had fallen under me four times in the course of the march. At

last we reached the end of the table-land, and found ourselves on the edge of a great precipice descending abruptly into a valley a thousand feet below. It extended for many miles in an almost straight line, and there was only one narrow and difficult path down it: even this we were unable to discover until our guides came up. Such precipices are not rare in Abyssinia, where the great table-lands often rise one above the other like the steps of a giant staircase, being nearly level for a certain distance, and then ending in a perpendicular wall of rock, a formation which renders travelling very difficult, as the passes are frequently so steep that oxen cannot traverse them, and everything has to be transported on the heads of natives.

The precipice down which we had now to descend was nearly perpendicular for upwards of seven hundred feet, then there was a broad ledge of rock covered with bush, which again terminated in another precipitous descent leading into a gorge below, full of forest trees, and enclosed on either side by high ranges of gray limestone rocks; beyond, the great valley of the Mareb was visible, and in the far distance, at the other side of it, we could see the fantastically-shaped mountains surrounding Adowa, looking like needles of gray granite against the clear blue sky. To those who have never witnessed the vast scale on which Nature has performed her works in Africa and the New World, it is difficult to convey an idea of the grandeur of such a view.

So narrow was the path which zig-zagged down the

steep face of the rock, that it was with difficulty we could lead our mules along; the way also was often nearly blocked up by great branches of trees which hung across it, for an Abyssinian will travel fifty times along the same road every year and yet never think it worth while to remove the obstacles which stand in his way. If you ask him why, he will tell you that as the people before him did not remove them, he don't see why it should fall to his lot to do so; and if you urge the advantage to future travellers, he will probably argue, like the Irish Member of Parliament, that as posterity has done nothing for him, he can't see why he should do anything for posterity. Crossing the ledge of rock I have before mentioned, we descended towards the gorge below, by the side of a tiny streamlet which danced down to the green glades of the forest in a succession of waterfalls. In the wet season this stream must have been a tremendous torrent, and it had cut its course in the rock so deep and smooth, that, though we were parched with thirst, and the thermometer registered more than 100° Fahr. in the shade, like Tantalus we were condemned to see what we most wished for without being able to reach it. The stunted trees that grew to the right and left of the path were full of baboons, who sat among their branches looking quite human; indeed, a party of natives under a tree looked, at a distance, so like fine specimens of these creatures, that we very nearly shot some of them by mistake to secure their skins. The gorge at the foot of the hill was blocked up by great masses of coarse

granite, worn round by the action of water, which must have been carried down here by some great flood of anterior times, as there were no granite mountains near at hand from which they could have rolled into the valley. The forest was full of cushat doves: and on almost every tree were to be seen couples of these beautiful and affectionate little birds, which filled the air with their gentle cooings. It was with great reluctance that we were forced to shoot some for supper; but as it was now one of the great Abyssinian fasts, we had been unable to procure meat for some time, and we had not been fortunate enough to find any game except baboons, which really looked too like men and brothers to be pleasant food. Hot and tired after a ten hours' march, we were glad to pitch our tents in the first glade of the forest which was sufficiently open to allow us to see round on all sides, for we were now in the country where Aba-Kassié was supposed to be lurking, and might be liable to an attack at any moment. The mountain stream I have before alluded to had disappeared under the surface of the ground, but there was a hole dug near our camp, from which we obtained water, though it was so black and nauseous that even the large quantities of coffee we boiled with it hardly made it drinkable.

This night we all slept in the same tent, each with his rifle and revolver at his side, and the spare guns loaded with double charges of buck shot, placed on the ground ready for use. Each of us in turn was to keep guard for two hours, as we knew we could not trust our

tired servants to maintain a vigilant watch; besides which, the very name of Aba-Kassié was one of such terror to Abyssinian ears, that it was only necessary for him to walk into a village and cry out in a loud voice, *Aba-Kassié balla beyt* (Aba-Kassié is lord here), for every one to take to flight; and once, when he had been actually taken prisoner, and his hands bound, he so terrified his captors by the mere *recital* of his achievements, that, unable to bear it any longer, they ran away and left him free to make his escape.

It fell to my lot to mount guard first, and nothing could be more beautiful than the moonlight, as I stepped out into it from the dark tent where my companions were sleeping, and began my solitary watch, pacing up and down under the great trees, whose white trunks, contrasting with the darker shadows of the forest, looked like a weird line of ghosts; while far above towered the peaks of the mountains as dim and shadowy as the walls of some fantastic castle in the air. Not a breath of wind was stirring; the porters lay by their loads, wrapped from head to foot in their grey blankets, looking like so many corpses, and no sound disturbed the stillness of the night save the crackling of the fire I had kindled under an iron-wood tree hard by.

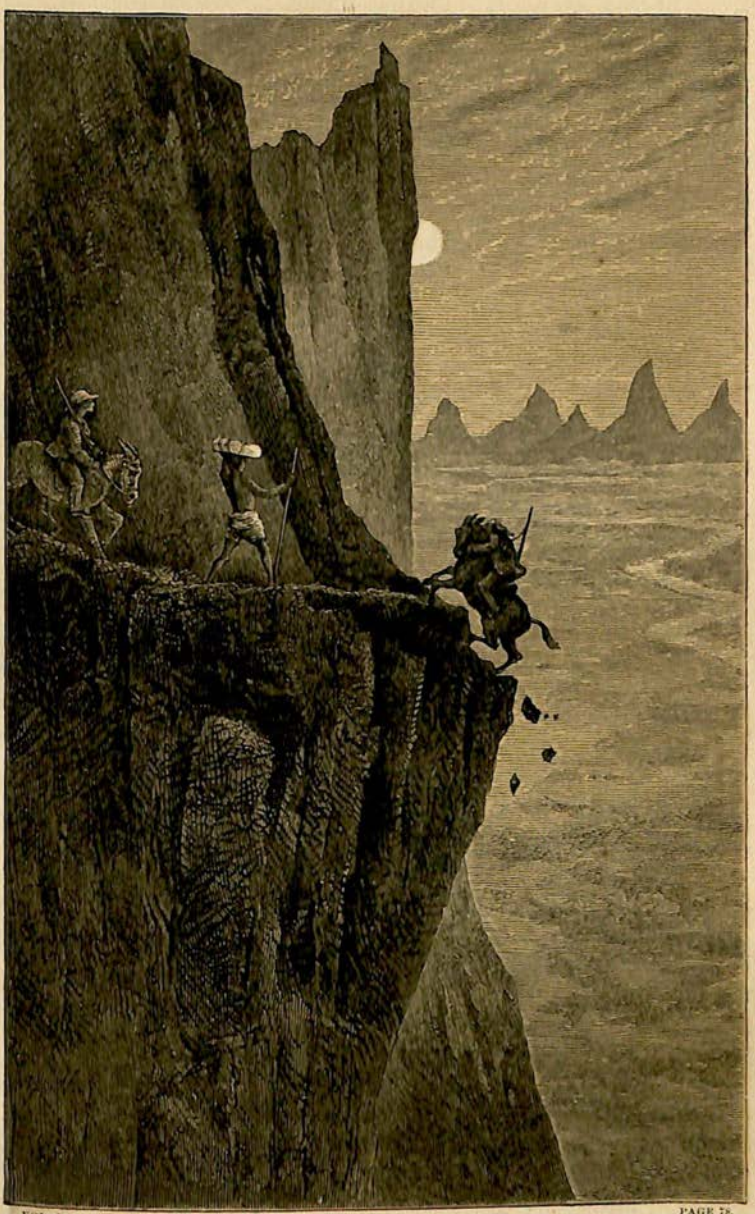
There is something wonderfully soothing in the perfect calm of a fine night in the tropics, where no ragged clouds disturb the blue depths of the sky, and the stars, instead of appearing to vibrate and tremble, look still and lustrous as planets do in our more northern climes.

So three hours slipped rapidly by, and I determined to take the second watch as well as the first. I had been sitting some time musing by the fire, thinking of all the old memories that the red glow of a fire somehow seems to have the power of conjuring up, when a slight rustling noise broke the prevailing silence, and I thought I could detect the sound of feet moving cautiously through the thickest part of the forest; picking up my gun, I glided noiselessly among the trees to reconnoitre, and presently, just in front of me, I saw something round and hairy like a man's head, appear over the top of a big boulder, and of course challenged it at once: "Who goes there? *Mindenaü?*"—but there was no answer; and I distinctly heard the scuttling of feet over the dry leaves. I rushed forward, and a little further on discovered the enemy, *i.e.*, a party of hares travelling by night; for these animals are very migratory, and often march great distances between sunrise and sunset. How I longed to shoot a brace of them, for there was nothing but dry bread for breakfast in the morning; but the risk of alarming my companions, and bringing them tumbling out to fight an imaginary Aba-Kạssié, was too great, so I let the hares go their way in peace, and soon after turned into the tent to sleep, while C. stepped forth silently to take his turn of the watch.

March 12th.—We passed the village of Goundet, and leaving the gorge to our right emerged on the shoulder of a steep and barren mountain. The Hamedo plains lay far below us, and at the further side of them stood a grand mountain range, which added greatly to the

beauty of the view. Our road was now only a narrow siding, not two feet wide, scooped in the face of the rock, and to avoid knocking our left shoulders, we had to lean out towards the precipice, over which our right feet hung pleasantly suspended in mid air. There was an angle of the road where the track was almost obliterated, and a bare face of rock descended perpendicularly to the valley eight hundred feet below. At this particular spot my unfortunate mule took the opportunity of stumbling, and her hind legs slipping over the precipice, we remained for what appeared an unconscionable time—like Mahomet's coffin—suspended between heaen and earth. I could not get off, for there was *nothing* under my feet; and when, after a fearful struggle, which exhausted all her strength, my mule at last dragged herself on to the track again, I knew for the first time in my life what it was to feel really giddy and faint.

When we reached the plain we again crossed the Mareb, here a much wider river than when we last saw it, though there was now no water in its sandy bed; however, by digging a hole we at length obtained some, which was very brackish, and only rendered palatable by mixing with it vinegar from our pickle bottles. Our men here displayed some uneasiness about Aba-Kassié, and begged those who had guns to load them and go in front, which meant, they wished us to leave them a clear field for running away. A short way beyond the Mareb we came to another stream flowing into it, where there was plenty of water and some tall



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AN ABYSSINIAN PRECIPICE.

trees, under the shade of which we were glad to halt till the heat of the noonday sun had passed, a proceeding which was a source of great interest and amusement to some little grey monkeys, which sat in the branches above.

On leaving the river we crossed some level pasture land, in the centre of which a lofty pile of granite rocks heaped one on the top of the other formed a striking object—a sort of natural logan stones. Everywhere the ground was highly suitable for cultivation, as indeed it was on most of the table lands we had crossed, and I am sure that coffee, cotton, and tobacco, would grow well in this climate, which, with the advantage of not being so unhealthy as many parts of India, is very warm, and watered by tropical rains at regular intervals.

At night we encamped on the banks of a tributary of the Mareb, not far from Addy Arbaty,* and, after a frugal meal of bread and cheese, again drew lots for the watches, and lay down to rest. It was my turn to mount guard for the two hours before daylight, and when I left the tent the air was bitterly cold, as is usual before sunrise. Though we had descended so often from one plain to another since leaving Asmara, we were still more than 4800 feet above the level of the sea, our total descent from the table land of Asmara having been rather more than 3000 feet. I had not been long on guard before I heard a noise in

* *Addy* Arbaty means the village of Arbaty.

the distance, and bending my ear to the ground distinguished the jingling of a mule's harness, and the sound of naked feet walking through the long grass. This time it was no delusion, as in the adventure of the previous night, and I soon caught sight of the spears of a party of natives advancing in our direction. When they got within fifty yards of our tent they halted, and kindled a blazing fire, and, wrapping themselves in their *kuarles*, lay down to sleep, with their feet towards the embers and their heads outwards, like the spokes of a wheel. Evidently this was not Aba-Kassié, or, if it was, he was making himself very comfortable.

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF ABA KASSIÉ, AND ARRIVAL AT ADOWA.

APROPOS of the redoubtable Abyssinian chief Aba Kassié, I may as well here relate what I afterwards learned of his history. It appears he was a native of Akele-gusai, and early displayed a propensity for plundering the merchants that passed through his country. When he had money he paid them liberally for the goods he took, and when he had none he took the goods all the same, but omitted to pay for them. To the rich and powerful he was haughty and merciless, while to the poor and destitute he was often kind and charitable; in fact, he soon became a sort of Abyssinian Fra Diavolo, or Robin Hood, with one of those spurious reputations for nobility of character, which are occasionally obtained by daring outlaws who recklessly indulge their every passion, whether it be for good or evil. Possessed of a hardy frame, great natural courage, and a quick understanding, Aba Kassié soon made himself feared even by chiefs more powerful than he. King John—then Prince Kassa of Tigre—declared him an outlaw, and sent troops against him, but, although frequently beaten and made prisoner, he ever succeeded in escaping, and re-assembling his

scattered forces, conducted his movements with such secrecy and expedition, that he always appeared where he was least expected, and people soon trembled at the very mention of his name, as if that was alone sufficient to invoke his presence; indeed, so often had he escaped when strongly guarded, that popular superstition attributed to him the power of rendering himself invisible, a theory of which his captors did not scruple to avail themselves to screen their cowardice. Prince Kassa tried to persuade him to enter his service, but a lawless life was not dearer to Robin Hood than it was to the barbarous chieftain, who rapidly gained such a reputation that he became almost a power in the country, and his alliance was sought by the enemies of Kassa. Aba Kassié had married a young girl of good connections at Adowa, and for some time lived very happily, but he was ever, as Dryden describes,

> "Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
> Restless, unfixed in principles and place;"

and at last, in a fight with Prince Kassa's soldiers, he was utterly defeated, and forced to fly for his life, while his young wife was led to the Prince a prisoner. Kassa returned her to her father's care, bidding him keep her under his roof, as he would not permit her to be with the outlawed Aba Kassié; but the girl loved her lawless husband, and longed to share his perils, so one night she escaped from her father's house, and wandered barefoot through the country until she joined

him in the mountains where he had taken refuge. By her devotion and influence she for some time enabled Aba Kassié to maintain his independence, but at length he was again defeated, and again forced to fly, leaving his faithful wife a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. There is an ugly story that she was exposed, chained and naked, in the market-place of Adowa, to the insults of the people, but I do not know if it is true that she was really treated with such cruelty; I trust it is not. At any rate, this time when Prince Kassa returned her to her father, he sent him a stern message that he must either leave the country with his daughter, or else force her to marry some other man, as he was determined she should not join her husband again. In vain were her tears and entreaties; for the purposes of private interest her father put humanity and justice on one side: the Prince declared her marriage with an outlaw no obstacle to her marrying again, and a new husband having been found, she was delivered over to him, though her real husband, to whom she was passionately attached, was still alive.

The Egyptian government had determined on taking Bogos, a province of Abyssinia, and thought it might be able to make use of Aba Kassié, if it could secure him. The robber chief's career had been a long course of plunder, murder, and rapine, and a price was now set on his head, which placed his life in constant danger. When, therefore, he received an invitation to go to Massowah, and treat with the Khedive's

government, he gladly accepted it, but no sooner had the Egyptians got him in their power than they seized him and shut him up as a prisoner in the house we afterwards occupied, at the same time allowing him a pension of twenty dollars a month, in case they might later require him as a friend. They then sent Hassan with a small cannon as a peace offering to Prince Kassa, and an offer to deliver up to him the body of Aba Kassié, if he would agree not to oppose their occupation of Bogos. This proposal was, however, received by Kassa with the scorn it deserved, and shortly afterwards Aba Kassié made his escape from Massowah, as I have before narrated. Probably the Egyptian government was not sorry that he should return to Abyssinia to do as much mischief as he could. At all events, they certainly used him as a bugbear to frighten us from our journey to that country.

We now come to the closing scene of Aba Kassié's history. Shortly before our arrival in Hamasen, he had appeared there with a few followers; but his extortions from the villages had been so great that the natives of the country had joined together and attacked his party, killing most of them, and forcing Aba Kassié himself to fly into the mountains for refuge, where he remained for some time in a very destitute condition. Prince Kassa was now King of Ethiopia, and Aba Kassié, unable to raise another party, at length gave himself up a prisoner to the king, whom he thought it better to trust than the Egyptians, of whose treachery he had already had an example. This occurred just before I

left Ethiopia. He was taken to the king's camp at Debra Tabor to be tried, and the charges of murder and robbery were fully proved against him; but, being now secure on his throne, Kassa would willingly have granted him a pardon, had it not been for his uncle Dedjatch Area, whose daughter (the king's cousin) Aba Kassié had seduced. According to Abyssinian law the nearest relations of the injured girl had the right to claim that her seducer should be killed or blinded of both eyes, and Dedjatch Area now demanded his revenge. This could not be refused, and the robber-chief was condemned to blindness. On the 16th June, 1873, he looked his last on the sun. He was led before the king, and a grass-cutter's knife having been heated in the fire, the red-hot blade was passed over the pupils of both his eyes, and Aba Kassié's sight was darkened for ever. After which he was set free to beg his bread as a charity of those from whom before he had so often taken it as a right.

March 13th.—The chief of the party which had slept near us during the night, came to salute K. as soon as it was daylight. He said that Ras Bariaü had received K.'s letter, and had ordered him to meet us and conduct us to Adowa, from which town he had started three days before. We told him he would now have to travel rather faster, as we intended to reach Adowa before evening, but this he declared to be impossible. By 7 A.M. we were all in the saddle, and soon after began the ascent of a very steep mountain. For some time our road lay over endless ranges of

hills, sometimes going up, sometimes down, but always taking us in the long run to a higher elevation than that we had previously attained. Very often there was scarcely any road at all, and we had to travel on foot, leading our beasts up and down the bare rocky sides of the mountains as best we could. At last we reached a village called Daro Tekly, situated on the top of a steep hill, and were glad to get a drink of the horrible native beer (*tella*), which I have before described. Our servants, who had been obliged to march on foot ever since we left Massowah, came panting up the hill perfectly white with dust—which looked very ghastly over their dark skins—and drank the tella with avidity, though they had never tasted it before, and could not understand how the Abyssinians could thus spoil good water, but fresh water was a luxury apparently not to be had at Daro Tekly. The road still continued over interminable mountains, and our English saddles soon gave way under the tremendous strain: first the breast-plates broke, then the cruppers, and we found ourselves riding alternately on the heads and tails of our mules. K.'s servant Tedla, who was riding behind me, tried to pick up my crupper, but his own saddle at once slipped round, and alighting on his head he rolled gracefully to the bottom of the hill, hitting against the stones with an audible thud as he went: luckily, being an Abyssinian, his head was a hard one. I noticed that the tree cactuses only flourished at a considerable elevation; in the lower valleys there were none to be found. We travelled eight hours under a tremendous

sun before we came to any stream where we could water our thirsty cattle; the poor beasts had too much sense to drink tella, and when we did reach a stream we made a very short halt, as we were determined to finish our journey that night, for the backs of most of the mules had become very sore, and they wanted rest. At length, shortly before sunset, we came in view of the beautiful vale of Adowa, surrounded by groups of lofty and strangely shaped mountains. On a slightly rising ground to the right of this valley stood the town, with a river called the Assam—very much resembling the Darro at Granada—flowing half round its walls. At our feet lay a little village called Addy Abun, situated on a stream which joins the Assam below Adowa: here we halted till our servants should come up.

Addy Abun, as its name signifies,* is the residence of the Abouna or Patriarch of Ethiopia. His name is literally *Abu na* (our Father), and he is the supreme head of the church in Abyssinia. When an Abouna dies a new one is appointed by the Patriarch of the Copts at Alexandria, and the King of Abyssinia pays 10,000 dollars for him. Once he goes to Abyssinia he is obliged to remain there for the rest of his days, and his life is hardly a sinecure, for there are, even for a layman, *two hundred and sixty* fast days in the Abyssinian year, and of course so holy a man as the Abouna is supposed to fast more. For forty-eight hours, from

* *Addy* in Tigre signifies village.

Friday to Sunday, the priests are not supposed to touch food or drink of *any kind* whatsoever, and on other fast days they generally are only allowed to eat towards evening, as the different fasts are regulated by the length of the shadow, some interdicting the use of food till a man's shadow has reached twice his own length, others till it has reached more, and so on, according to the time of year. During many of the fasts they must not even touch fish, and their only food is dried peas, dressed in a very disagreeable sort of vegetable oil, like castor oil, and an equally unpalatable dish made of a species of spinach.

As for the poor Abouna, being the holiest man of all, he is popularly supposed to live *entirely* on *kousso*, a powerful laxative medicine, used for destroying the tape-worm. He has, however, a large revenue at his disposal, and the villages of Daro Tekly and Addy Abun both belong to him, together with large tracts of country, but a prisoner for life in a foreign land, his lot must be rather a sad one, and is not, I think, to be envied.

When our servants arrived, we forded the stream in front of us, which is called Mai Gogua, and on the opposite bank were greeted by a large party of Abyssinian warriors on horseback, attended by their shield-bearers carrying their shields and spears. The leader of this party was a young man, with a singularly graceful figure, and classically-shaped head and features, who, as soon as he saw us, dismounted and came forward to kiss our hands and welcome us to Adowa in

the name of Ras Bariaü. Several others, who knew the General, also came forward to greet him. They all had their heads and feet bare, for no Abyssinian, unless he be a priest, thinks of covering his head or feet, but their hair was carefully platted and gathered into a sort of little queue behind the back of the neck, the whole being thickly anointed with butter. They were dressed in loose white trowsers, long tunics of the same colour, like the Moorish *eri*, and crimson and white *kuaries*, draped round them like togas. Some wore round their necks a sort of mantle, made of the skin of the black leopard, and all had great curved swords with scarlet leather scabbards suspended at their *right* sides; for, in Abyssinia, they say that only a woman would take two hands to draw a sword. The harness of many of the horses was mounted in solid silver, as were also the buffalo-hide targets carried by the *Gasha-zagries* (shield bearers).

After interchanging a few compliments we all mounted again and rode towards Ras Bariaü's house, which stood on a hill opposite the town. In front of us marched a band of dusky musicians blowing on long wooden horns, while behind there followed a motley crowd of soldiers armed with spears, guns, and matchlocks, who, however, were preceded by our own body servants carrying the rifles. At each turn in the path this strange cortége was increased by fresh arrivals, and every now and then our companions would dash forward at full gallop, brandishing their arms and making their horses caricole and demivault like the excitable

Fitz Eustace in Marmion, when he challenges any one to deny the pleasure of dying for his country. As we approached the top of the hill, a number of guns were discharged into the air, and soon after we entered a rude stone enclosure, and, dismounting from our horses, were led into the presence of the Ras.

The room we now entered was a circular chamber, occupying as usual the whole of the house; the floor was of mud but strewn with fresh rushes as in the English houses of the fifteenth century, and from the walls projected a number of horns, to which were suspended the Ras's sword and shield and several long matchlocks belonging to his soldiers. A circle of rough wooden pillars, draped with silk, supported the conical roof, which was lined with reeds, fantastically decorated with bits of coloured cloth. The only furniture in the place was an old European sofa, two chairs, and a low wooden *algu* (stretcher) covered with a handsome leopard skin, on which the Ras was reclining. Such was the palace of the Viceroy of Tigre. The Ras himself was a powerful man of very dark colour, with a look of great obstinacy in his countenance; the right half of his face was concealed by a black silk handkerchief thrown over his head, for he had lost his right eye and been fearfully disfigured by a sword cut, received in battle. K. told us that he was esteemed a very brave soldier, and had formerly been in the service of King Theodorus, to whom he was much attached, but, on one occasion, having refused to run away when all his soldiers had taken to flight, he had been made prisoner

by Prince Kassa, who so admired his courage that he took him into favour, and subsequently appointed him Ras of Tigre. The old chief received us very courteously, and motioned us to sit down on the sofa at his side, the rest of the company arranging themselves on the ground at his feet, while the servants and soldiers stood in a row round the wall. A large earthen jar of *tedge* (mead) was now brought in, and several glass bottles in wicker cases. These were taken out, filled, and handed to the guests, who were not slow in emptying them in the primitive fashion, for there were no glasses. In Abyssinia it is considered polite to drink at least two bottles of tedge at a visit, but you are at liberty to pass the bottle when half empty to a favourite servant, for him to finish. As good tedge is rather heady, we always took care, when out visiting, to keep a native servant, with a steady head, standing behind us, for the special purpose of emptying our bottles, a duty which it seemed to give him the greatest satisfaction to perform. As it was dark by the time our two bottles were finished, we made our salaam to the Ras, and were conducted to a *gojio* (hut) constructed of branches, where some *algas* had been placed for our accommodation. We had been travelling more than twelve hours without food, and were therefore delighted when Mustafa, with a profound salaam, announced "dinner," which straightway walked into the hut *alive*, in the shape of a sheep, a present from Ras Bariaü. It was at once killed, and the legs and shoulders thrown on the hot embers of the fire to grill, a couple of slaves

acting meanwhile as living candlesticks, and throwing a dim light over the scene, from little beeswax tapers they held in their hands.

Our porters had not yet arrived with the tents and baggage, so, after a hasty meal, we lay down in our clothes to pass our first night in the capital of Tigre, it being now just twenty-two days since we began our march inland from Massowah.

Alas! the European in Abyssinia more often seeks sleep than finds it. The *Gojio* swarmed with animal life, and it was in vain that we fixed straps round our ancles, tied cords round the ends of our sleeves, and enveloped our heads in pocket-handkerchiefs, till we were nearly smothered; our enemies still found defective places in our armour where they could penetrate, and left us not a moment of peace. As serpents are said to come forth to the boiling milk of the Poitou snake-charmers, so do all the *pulices*, &c., of an Abyssinian dwelling creep from their holes at the approach of a white man, especially during Lent, when the natives are so much reduced by fasting that even a flea can't get any nourishment out of them. The European must be thick-skinned indeed who can sleep through the first night in a new habitation, and, dead tired though we were, we lay awake all night watching in silent agony

> "The weary hours steal on,
> And flaky darkness break."

CHAPTER VII.

CAMP LIFE AT ADOWA.

March 14th.—Unable to bear the *Gojio* any longer, I escaped into the open air at daybreak, and seeing that the top of a tall isolated mountain just behind us reflected the first rays of the sun, wandered towards it the sooner to enjoy their warming influence. For some height its sides were covered with low bushes, but these presently gave place to steep grey rocks, which were only to be surmounted with difficulty, and so intent had I become on going forward that I never thought to look back, and, at last, on coming to an inaccessible place, and pausing to seek for some other way up, was startled to see that I was on the face of a very ugly precipice, and that it would be quite impossible to retrace my steps. The rock above me appeared impracticable, and for a short time my head swam, as I clung to the narrow ledge of rock on which I was kneeling, and wondered what was to be done next. "When you get into a difficulty," says a modern philosopher, "court the soothing influence of a pipe, and think quietly over the best ways of getting out of it;" but, on the present occasion I could not follow this wise maxim, for two good reasons; first, I had to

hold on to the rock with both hands, and secondly, I had no pipe, which reason, by the way, I might have stated first, as it would have saved me the trouble of mentioning the other. However, though I could not smoke, I thought a good deal, and decided that if I *was* to break my neck it would be just as well to do so in trying to reach the top of the mountain, as in ignominiously descending it again, so I called to mind all the experience I had gained among the Alps of the Bernese Oberland years before, and by not again looking down the precipice, or disturbing my equanimity by speculations on what would be my fate if I fractured a limb where no one would come to look for me, in a short time steadied my nerves, and was able by digging nails and toes into the crevices of the rock to draw myself up, with great exertion, to a more accessible place. At length I gained the top of the mountain, more than two thousand feet above the valley of Adowa, and of course was rewarded by a beautiful view, but I had hardly lain down to enjoy it before I fell into a deep sleep, the natural reaction of my overstrained faculties. When I awoke the sun was high in the heavens, some large birds were sitting on a stone close to my head, and green lizards were running over my legs catching flies. I sat up, and saw around me a magnificent panorama of mountains. On every side range after range of their pyramidal peaks extended as far as the eye could reach; some of them were almost perpendicular from top to bottom like huge Druidical stones, two thousand feet high; others, such as Rayo,

Amba Sa-Dinkel, &c., bent over at the summit in the most fantastical shapes, like the imaginary rocks depicted in old-fashioned drawings, while some—Amba Guraha, Amba Mai-Saab, and Guendesta, were as upright and sharp as needles. *Amba*, in Tigre, signifies a rocky hill. The mountain on which I was now standing, was called Soloda, and is about 8,287 feet above the level of the sea. At this height the air was sharp and bracing, and as every crevice in the rock from top to bottom is covered with vegetation, this mountain is famous for the variety of flora to be found upon it.

From my elevated position I could see over most of the surrounding mountains, not more than four of which were loftier than Soloda; of these, three were of granite, the highest being a great mountain behind Adowa, called Amba Semayata, whose steep sides, rising more than four thousand feet clear above the plain, gave it somewhat the appearance of an enormous sugar-loaf when viewed from a distance. Its total height above the level of the sea is, I believe, some ten thousand odd hundred feet.

Far below me lay the town of Adowa, its grey stone houses looking like a tiny heap of boulders by the river side. White mists were floating in the valley, but overhead the sun shone through a cloudless sky. Looking towards the Ras's house I could see three little white knobs like mushrooms suddenly spring up behind it, which I soon divined must be our tents, and as I had now been several hours absent from my companions—after taking a hasty sketch of the view—I

began to seek for a better way by which to descend. The face of the mountain, however, seemed on all sides equally precipitous, though I believe there does exist a path up it which I was unable to find. As I clung to the white quartz and porphyry rocks, I could see the eagles balancing themselves on their outspread wings far below my feet, and, I confess, envied them their pinions. But my head was now steady, thanks to a good sleep, and having taken off my boots and slightly scratched my feet on the rocks, I obtained sufficient foothold to descend, though the strain on the arms was still very severe, as I had to support the greater part of my weight on them.

A couple of slaves, cutting grass at the foot of the mountain, being disturbed by some stones I had accidentally dislodged, looked up to see where they came from, and when they saw a white man suddenly appear, hanging in the air over the edge of a rock above them, gave a loud yell, and took to their heels as fast as they could, evidently thinking it was *Satan* come to carry them off for their sins.

When I arrived at the Ras's house I found our camp all in order, a lot of natives were busily engaged in front of our tent, dismembering a slaughtered cow for breakfast, and, luxury of luxuries, my india-rubber bath was standing full of clear water, ready for the morning's toilet. As our iron beds had been left at Guddofelassie, the Ras had sent us native *algas*, which, like the Moorish *Angareps*, are wooden frames supported on four legs with strips of raw hide laced across.

Mindful of the experience of the previous night, we had them sunk in the river for four hours, though even that did not *quite* free them from vermin.

The Ras had invited us to dine with him, and at three o'clock sent us an escort to conduct us to his house, for no man of importance walks out in Abyssinia without his armed attendants. Our guards carried old brown Besses with fixed bayonets on their shoulders, but the guns were so long, and some of the soldiers—or rather the boys who aspired to that martial name—so short, that it was often a doubtful question whether the soldiers would support the guns, or the guns upset the soldiers.

We found Ras Bariaŭ with several guests sitting at his feet, as on the previous day, but there was now a master of the ceremonies standing at the door, with a long stick, which he used to chastise all inquisitive people who tried to peep in on the feast. A number of slaves presently entered, carrying round baskets on their heads, which they deposited at the Ras's feet. These contained great cakes of bread, some white, some brown, according to the corn they were made of; there were also earthenware bowls containing sauces made with Indian corn, capsicums, lentils, &c., to flavour the bread. The Ras apologised for offering us no animal food, on the ground that, being Lent, it was a strict fast. A servant now came round and poured water over our hands out of a brazen vessel, after which he spread some of each kind of sauce on the bread in the basket before us, and we were invited to begin the

repast. Everybody ate with their fingers, dipping bits of the bread, which was soft and spongy, into the sauce which pleased them best. The bread was in large wafers, about as thick as a pancake, and a foot and a half in diameter; there were more than a dozen of these wafers in each basket. When more sauce was wanted, a servant scooped some of it up in his hands and spread it over the centre of the bread. If the Ras saw any of the native guests he wished especially to honour, he broke off a piece of bread, rubbed it in *all* the sauces, and rammed it into their mouths with his own hands. They however managed to handle their food with such skill that very little mess was made in eating it, and though the bread was rather bitter, some of the sauces were good, and the meal was not so unpalatable as might be supposed.

After the Ras and his guests had eaten enough, the remainder of the food was divided among his servants and slaves, each taking his share in turn according to his rank; but I noticed that one ingenious youth, being anxious to get his meal before the rest, had hidden himself under the Ras's alga, from which post of vantage he, every now and then, stretched out a furtive hand, and abstracted bits of bread from the basket appropriated to his master's own use.

I could not help thinking that the stout old chief with his *kuarie* draped round him like a toga, as he supported himself on one elbow on his couch, laughing and chatting with his guests, looked the very picture of a convivial citizen of ancient Rome, with only this dif-

ference, that the fare he was eating was anything but Epicurean. Father Louis, too, with his beard and cowl, looked a fair personification of the ecclesiastical Rome of the middle ages; but we, in the ordinary dress of the nineteenth century, must, I fear, have looked sadly incongruous objects amid the semi-barbarous surroundings of the Ethiopian Ras; yet I do not think there was one Abyssinian present who would not gladly have discarded his own picturesque costume to wear any part of our dress, and have thought himself greatly improved by the change. *De gustibus, &c.*, but I often wonder how it is that Orientals, who look magnificent in their own rich costumes, delight in nothing so much as making themselves look like monkeys by dressing in our clothes.

After the war with Abyssinia, an Englishman asked one of the chiefs what gift he would most like in return for some assistance he had rendered, and the Ethiopian at once replied that there was one thing above all others that his heart coveted, and that was—not a rifle, or a telescope, or even a cannon—but the full dress of a British general officer! *À propos de bottes*, as the French say, I suppose it was with a notion that to advance the civilisation of a people's dress is the same thing as advancing the civilisation of their minds, that the British government conceived the bright idea of sending to Prince Kassa, among other presents, several pairs of boots with scarlet tops; though *why* the prince should have been thus led to believe that it was fashionable in England to wear scarlet top boots, or *why*, indeed, her Majesty's government should con-

sider it its vocation to supply him with boots at all, considering that he never wears any, is one of those awful mysteries only known to the Foreign Office. However, the boots were sent, and when Prince Kassa received them, he considered himself bound, as a compliment to her Majesty — in whose name they had come—to put them on. He did not, I fancy, find it a very pleasant task, as he had no stockings; however, "*il faut souffrir pour être beau,*" and the prince bore his pain like a man; he even went to bed in his boots, for there was no getting them off once they were on; but towards midnight his agonies were so great that even his African stoicism could hold out no longer, and he sent for K. to show him how to get quit of those boots with the scarlet tops, which he solemnly vowed never to wear again. I think the future Emperor of Ethiopia that day learned a lesson concerning the pleasures of civilisation, which he will never forget. It would be well if some honourable member would one night ask the government why it don't send boot-jacks to African princes whom it supplies with boots, as this is really a serious omission, and might lead us into another war.

While the eating continued at the Ras's feast, there was nothing to drink; but as soon as the baskets of bread had been removed, bottles of *tedge* were served round to all the guests. Each of the Abyssinians prostrated himself twice before the Ras till his forehead touched the ground, and then they set to work to drink in earnest, emptying bottle after bottle, without

its producing any apparent effect on them; only one old man, said to be a hundred years of age, got slightly incoherent and swore that we were all his brothers after his fourth bottle, that is, after he had drunk a full gallon, for the bottles held more than a quart each. The Abyssinians hold to the ancient rule which forbids the mixing of cups and council together, and it is not their custom to discuss any serious subject while drinking tedge; things which would give grave offence, if said before drinking, are accepted as merely banter under the genial influences of the mead; chaff and jest are therefore freely indulged in at these feasts. This custom, however, renders it a very difficult matter to induce an Abyssinian to talk seriously, as he is sure to try to put off the trouble of so doing by sending for the tedge horn, after the arrival of which, it is useless to try to make him talk sense.

We were now, however, so anxious to make arrangements for our future movements, that we decided to intimate formally to the Ras that we wished to speak with him. Therefore, after everybody had had enough tedge, the master of the ceremonies turned out all the guests, beginning with those of the lowest rank, till nobody but the Ras's brother remained: even he, too, rose up and, prostrating himself like the other guests, prepared to go, but we requested him not to do so, and, Tella acting as our interpreter, we settled down to a regular palaver.

The Ras now told the general that King Johannes had crossed the Takazze with all his army, being

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determined to carry it into the western provinces of Ethiopia, and make Wareina, the Ras of Amhara, bow before the Imperial throne.

We told the Ras of our desire to shoot on the Takazze, and with the smiling readiness of a true son of the east, he promised to send at once to Guddofelassie for our remaining baggage, and to get everything ready so as to enable us to start in six days; but these promises were never intended to be fulfilled. That same day the Ras sent a letter to the king, by a running messenger, to tell him of our arrival in his country, and to ask what he was to do with us. In the meantime he took precautions to detain our baggage on the road, rightly judging that we should be unable to quit Adowa unsupplied with money, ammunition, or guides. It therefore came to pass that we were detained nearly a month in the capital of Tigre, and though perfectly well treated, and apparently quite free to do what we liked, we were in reality, through the cunning of Ras Bariaü, as unable to leave it without his sanction as if we had been his prisoners. The despotic old chief proved as obstinate as his face bespoke him, and we had constant fights with him on the subject of continuing our journey; he would even sometimes go to bed, or mount his horse and escape from his own council chamber, if he thought we were coming to speak to him about it, for as day after day passed by he could frame no fresh excuses for delaying us, but he never gave in, and it was not till long afterwards, and under an imperative order

from the king, that his stubborn spirit of opposition was subdued, and he was forced to beg forgiveness for his conduct towards us. Time, however, did not hang heavy on our hands during our stay at Adowa. We repaired our saddlery, and made new cruppers and breast-plates suitable to the mountain passes. With General K.'s assistance we instructed Mustafa in cooking, his own ideas of that art being of the most primitive kind. Both Father Louis and Baulo suffered much from attacks of fever, and required doctoring. Our clothes, hats, boots, guns, and watches were all in want of additions and improvements, and each day saw us attempting some new trade, for here it was necessary to be doctor, saddler, gunsmith, veterinary surgeon, surveyor, and cobbler all in one. With the assistance of an old Mahomedan, known on the Hadgi Achmed, we hired a number of native servants, to each of whom we paid two Maria Teresa dollars a month, and gave a piece of cotton cloth for them to make themselves clothes with. Some of these lads had to cut grass for the horses, and were furnished with little curved knives, like sickles, for that purpose, but grass cutting is considered a very lowly occupation in Abyssinia, and our handsomest boys hired themselves on the special condition that they should not be required to do it. Their particular duty was to carry our rifles when we rode out, a pair of them running in front of each horse. If we went on a visit, they all formed into a guard of honour, the rifle-bearers going in front, and the others, armed with shields and spears, following behind. The

Abyssinian shields are round, and convex in the centre, like the old Scotch target; they have a handle in the middle to hold them by, and are generally made of buffalo or rhinoceros hide, stout enough to turn the point of a lance, or the stroke of a sword. The handsomest are ornamented with plates of silver, curiously worked, while others have a long strip of skin cut from the mane of a lion hanging to them, and silver ornaments round the edges, while the common ones have no ornamentation at all, except some lines stamped on the leather. The spears are almost all made of soft iron, the head being usually shaped like the leaf of the water iris, with a ridge down the centre, and flat sharp sides, tapering up to a point. Round the shank, where it joins on to the stick, some yards of silver or copper wire are often bound, and at the other end of the stick, which is generally of bamboo or lancewood, there is a heavy iron ferrule to balance the spear, which is not more than eight feet long, and more often used as a javelin than as a lance. Most of the Abyssinian swords are shaped like a gigantic sickle, sharp at both edges, with a straight handle, also very like the handle of a sickle, made of dark wood or rhinoceros horn. The Abyssinians generally cut at their adversary with the *inside* edge of these swords, as if they were reaping corn, and inflict terrible wounds. The sword, shield, and spear form the complete equipment of a native warrior, but in Tigre they are also generally armed with an old Turkish gun or Portuguese match-lock, so long and heavy that it cannot be fired

without a rest. Three hundred years ago the people of Tigre used bows and arrows, but now they are quite abandoned in that province, but there are still many parts of the country where the villagers go about armed with short heavy clubs, made of iron wood, and bows are, I believe, still used by the Shangallas.

At our camp behind the Ras's house we were tormented by two hostile armies, one of flies, the other of dogs. Of the flies it is only necessary to say that they swarmed in our tent by tens and hundreds of thousands, filling up our eyes, creeping into our ears, buzzing in our hair, and even getting into our mouths. It was in vain to try to brush them away; you might kill half a dozen in the corner of each eye any hour of the day only to find as many more there next minute. We often tried shutting the tent up and burning brown paper, but though it nearly stifled *us* it actually seemed to agree with *them*. Then we tried periodically blowing them up by exploding gunpowder, but it soon became apparent that we might blow the tent up before we should make any visible diminution in their numbers, and though it was horrible not to be able to sit still for a moment without being covered with flies, and to have them continually crawling over one's drawings, up one's sleeves, down one's neck, and into one's plate, we were at last obliged to resign ourselves patiently to our fate.

If the flies plagued us by day, the wild dogs had it all to themselves after sunset; all night long they were to be heard howling, quarrelling, and fighting

round our tents. When we lay in bed at night, every now and then we would be awakened by a series of growls and snarls, not three inches from our ears, on the other side of the canvas; then a whole pack of dogs would rush past, tumbling over the tent-ropes and nearly pulling down the whole edifice about our heads. Even in the daytime if Mustafa turned his back for a moment on the fire, a wild dog was sure to snap up a leg of mutton and scour away with it in triumph, and sore was the tribulation of Mustafa at being surrounded by these unclean beasts, whose touch was contamination to a true believer. Above all, contact with the black end of a dog's nose is most especially to be avoided, according to the injunctions of the Prophet, and often would Mustafa complain with ludicrous sadness that "Abyssinian dog him very bad dog indeed, him poke him black nose ebreywhere." I have called these dogs wild, because they used to appear from among the rocks, and, like proscribed vagrants, had no fixed habitation, or visible means of subsistence. When we first saw them they were half starving, but after we had been encamped some time they began to get into condition, and at last grew quite fat on what they stole from us. They had no owners, nor would they acknowledge any, for it must not be supposed we did not try to domesticate them; but vain were all our efforts to improve their morals; vagabonds they were by nature, and vagabonds they remained. They would steal, but they would not take what was freely offered them, and we had a curious example of the skill with which they

conducted their thefts. It had grown into a custom with us to manufacture a Sunday plum-pudding every week, at least such a pudding as could be made with the simple ingredients, flour, water, butter, spice, a few currents and raisins, and the kernels of peach-stones. One morning Mustafa came to tell us, with many salaams, that the Sunday pudding had been carried off by the dogs in the night. We blamed him for carelessness, but he swore by his beard and his eyes that he had put the pudding in a box and slept with the box under his head as a pillow, but that the dogs were craftier than *Sheitân*, the spirit of evil, and that they had opened the box and carried off the pudding. This story seemed so very improbable that, having had some more puddings made, we determined to keep them during the night in our own tent, and having placed a chair on the top of the iron table, and a tin bowl, containing the puddings, on the top of that, we fastened up the tent and went to sleep with the pleasant conviction that this time our cherished puddings could not disappear without our being alarmed; but *mirabile dictu!* when morning came the puddings were gone, nor had any of our *échafaudage* been displaced. We now remembered that we had heard a slight rustling noise in the night, and had thought of firing a pistol in its direction, but as the moon was shining bright outside, it seemed so impossible that a dog could creep under the curtain of the tent without our seeing it, that we went to sleep again. Even the meekest of creatures will rebel against having its food taken away

from it. Now our puddings were gone our hearts were hardened. Before the sun set that day three or four of the dogs had been shot, as a solemn warning; and after that they were rather less daring in their depredations.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAPITAL OF TIGRE.

ADOWA, the capital of Tigre, is situated at the head of a fertile valley, through which flows the river Assam. This valley is surrounded by mountains, and the course of the river runs nearly due north-west. A short way below the town of Adowa the Assam is joined by Mai Gogua, a river flowing from the north, and on reaching the end of the valley, it suddenly makes a bend to the south-east, and pursuing the natural conformation of the country, winds its way down to the great bed of the Takazze, thus adding its mite to the great floods that annually fertilise Egypt.

The plains of Adowa furnish three harvests, the first of wheat, barley, and *tef*, which is sown in July and August, and reaped in November; the barley being first harvested, next the wheat, and lastly the *tef*. The natives then immediately sow a second crop of barley, which is ready for reaping in February, and after that a sort of vetch is sown which is ripe for gathering in April. After each harvest the ground is fired, to kill the rats and field mice, which are very plentiful, and may be seen by hundreds in the hot weather, popping in and out of every crack in the

earth. This firing, and a very rude sort of ploughing, is, I believe, all the cultivation the ground receives at the hands of the Abyssinians.

"Adowa" is said to signify pass or passage, a name which the town derives from being on the high way for merchants travelling through Abyssinia, from Gondar to the Red Sea. The greater part of the town is built of stone, and stands at the foot of a low hill, on the east side of the valley, with the river —here but a narrow stream—flowing beneath its walls. It is considered a very healthy place, and being about 6,269 feet above the level of the sea, is sometimes even cold in the rainy season. Though it is the capital of one of the most powerful provinces of Ethiopia, the houses are only built of loose stones, lined with mud, for the Abyssinians seem not to know how to make mortar, and though there are bridges, constructed by the Portuguese, still standing in Ethiopia, the traveller and merchant must either cross the Assam on stepping-stones, or ford it with his mules, before he can enter the town, as the art of making bridges has also been lost to the Ethiopians. The narrow streets are without pavement, and have tall stone walls on either side, with reed doors in them, leading into the yards of the different houses. Many of these houses are of the primitive circular shape, with the high conical thatched roofs, which are so common throughout the country; but others, following the Portuguese model, are square, and some even have two stories. There are no shops or bazaars, as in

the commonest Arab towns, but there is a market every Saturday in a large field near Adowa, and here, every week, there congregate crowds of men and women, clad in all the fantastic costumes, or want of costume, of inner Africa, who have brought their wares from long distances to the market of the capital. Here you may see a group of tawny maidens, with necklaces of blue beads, and leopard skins round their loins, sitting beside the large baskets of Indian corn, lentils, *tef*, and other kinds of grain, which they have carried in on their heads over-night; there, a party of mountaineers, armed with shield and spear, who have brought hides for sale, which they have roughly tanned with the juice of the *kolqual*, or tree cactus. Long strings of donkeys are also to be seen, laden with fine *kuaries* and cotton cloth from Western Abyssinia; while other parts of the field are devoted to the sale of parasols made of basket-work, to keep off the sun; or of little brushes, made of white horse-hair, for the priests to brush away the flies, an occupation which would be considered too effeminate for a warrior, though in his own house a chief often has a servant for that purpose. Here and there are vendors of cowrie shells and blue beads, who drive a brisk trade with the girls from the mountain villages. Arms too, shields, swords, and spears, may also be bought, and war horses, gay in scarlet trappings, though looking sadly under-sized to our English eyes. Mules, donkeys, big-tailed sheep, and humped oxen are there too, but beef and mutton are in little request during fast

time. The sheep of Abyssinia have an enormous fatty excrescence at the tail, so large and heavy that they often look as if they could scarcely support it. The learned Ludolphus, in his history of Ethiopia, published in the seventeenth century, avers that the Ethiopians have to make carts for their sheep to carry their tails on, and this resembles the story told by Herodotus of the Arabian sheep; but I confess I have never seen the carts, though I have often seen the tails. The market of Adowa also boasts traders from the sea coast, with common glass bottles for drinking tedge; and even little round looking-glasses, in which great ladies who can afford to buy them may see their charms reflected. We actually managed to secure two big blue cotton umbrellas, the possession of which added greatly to our state and dignity, for, in Abyssinia, nobody but people of the highest rank, the very *crême de la crême*, own blue cotton umbrellas, and our *entrée* into the most select circles was secured, and we might have married coffee-coloured heiresses and settled for life the moment we possessed those treasures.

Of course, when a couple of white strangers, in their native dress, entered the market, all business was suspended, and such a crowd gathered round that our servants had difficulty in keeping a way clear for our mules. When we returned to our camp on the hill, we could see the brown shoulders of the people glistening in the sunshine just like a swarm of ants congregated round the town. The population of Adowa is very uncertain; when the king is there, there may be 20,000

people; when he goes away, his army, and nearly all who can, follow him, and perhaps not more than 4000 inhabitants remain. When we were there, I was told the population did not exceed that number, and that out of these, 1000—that is one-fourth of the population—were ecclesiastics of one kind or another, the number of priests in Abyssinia being something enormous, compared with the total population of the country.

On a rising ground in the centre of Adowa is a large church, which has just been completed by the present king. It stands at the top of a circular flight of steps built of grey unhewn stones from the mountain side. The body of the church is round, and has two walls, an inner and an outer, about twelve feet apart. The inner wall has four wooden doors, facing the points of the compass, and four windows facing the half points; within it stands a wooden altar which, when the doors are open, is hidden from view by a large curtain, one of the presents sent by Her Majesty to Prince Kassa. The outer wall has also four doors, and in addition it is pierced at regular intervals with oblong openings, which give it the effect of an open colonnade; these openings begin at the height of a man's shoulder, and extend up to the conical thatched roof, which is ornamented on the under side with yellow reeds, and covers both the inner and outer wall, affording a convenient shelter to numbers of wild pigeons, of a dark grey colour, with white spots. The framework round the doors and windows of the inner wall has all been

cut with the axe, but so smoothly that it looks as if it had been planed. However, the workmen had evidently no idea of morticing, and wherever two pieces of wood join, they have simply nailed an iron plate over them. The doors themselves, and the altar, were made by a European carpenter called Naretti, who lives at Adowa, and is in the service of the king; there is therefore nothing strange about their workmanship.

Only the priests enter within the inner wall of the church, where stands the altar; the congregation remaining under the colonnade, or on the steps outside if there be many people. Round the church is a graveyard, full of unhewn stones, set on end, which mark the heads and feet of the graves. There are also two or three big trees in it, to one of which is suspended a large bell, which was sent by the Governor of Massowah, as a present to the King of Abyssinia, at the time when they were friends. The only means of ringing this bell is by pulling the hammer against the side with a rope.

There are several churches at Adowa of older date, though smaller, than the one I have described, but Adowa has few claims to antiquity, having been built within the last 200 years. The former capital of Tigre was the ancient town of Axum, which I shall describe later. I have said that there are an enormous number of priests in Abyssinia, but it must not be supposed that the Abyssinians are a truly religious people On the contrary, I am convinced that many of them—as is only too often the case at home—

merely observe the ordinances of the church through habit, or because they are ashamed not to do as others do; and many only become priests, because by that means they can lead a lazy life, and live on the community at large. It is easy for an Abyssinian youth to become a priest if he has a moral character, and knows how to read Geez; it is true the priests often have to get up at three or four in the morning to sing the Psalms of David, which they intone in a monotonous manner for hours together, and that they have to observe many fasts—but these are small drawbacks to the mind of an Abyssinian, who, as a rule, infinitely prefers to become a priest or soldier to earning his bread by steady industry. All priests, except the Abouna and the monks, may marry, but if a priest loses his first wife, and marries again, he ceases to be a priest. There is a form of marriage in Abyssinia which is blest by the church, and unless a man has been married in this way, and has only one wife, he is not supposed to receive the communion; however, a man can divorce his wife when he likes, and very few Abyssinians ever take the trouble to be properly married at all, their morals being very loose on this point; but Bruce's statement "there is no such thing as marriage in Abyssinia" (Vol. III. Chap. ii.), is incorrect, though it is true that the religious ceremonies of marriage are often neglected, while the *feasting* on the occasion of the union of a young couple is still kept up in all its glory.

According to old authors, Christianity was intro-

duced into Abyssinia in the time of Saint Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, about the year 330, and the story told is that a merchant of Tyre having travelled to a part of Ethiopia on the Red Sea—probably the harbour of Adulis—died, or was killed, and his property seized. He, however, left behind him two young Christian men, called by the Abyssinians (according to Ludolphus*) Fremonatum and Sydracum, who being taken before the king of Abyssinia, were received into great favour, and when the king died they remained in the service of the Queen Regent until the young king was old enough to govern. Now it happened that during this time the Christian merchants who traded on the coast of the Red Sea had become much esteemed by the Ethiopians for their superior truth and probity, and Fremonatum being grieved to see the country sunk in paganism, and hoping to spread the Christian religion, got permission to pay a visit to Saint Athanasius at Alexandria, and was by him instructed, and made bishop of Ethiopia; he then returned, built churches, and initiated the people in the Christian religion by baptism. His conduct is said to have been so mild and amiable that he was called by the people *Abba Salama*, the pacific father.

For those who may wish to have some idea of the Abyssinian creed, I give a translation of a catechism used for instructing the young in the heads of the Ethiopic faith, according to Gregory, an intelligent priest, a native of Amhara in Western Abyssinia, who

* Book iii. chap. 2.

visited Europe in the 17th century, and repeated it verbally to Ludolphus, from whom I copy it. I have no reason to suppose that the catechism now in use in Abyssinia varies in any material point from this one, which was in use 200 years ago.

Question. What God dost thou worship?—*Answer.* The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, but one Deity.

Q. Of these three Persons, which is the first, which the last, which the greatest, which the least?—*A.* There is no Person first, or last; no Person superior, or inferior; but all equal in all things.

Q. How many Persons?—*A.* Three.

Q. How many Gods?—*A.* One.

Q. How many Kingdoms?—*A.* One.

Q. How many Powers?—*A.* One.

Q. How many Creators?—*A.* One.

Q. How many Wills?—*A.* One.

Q. Is God limited by time?—*A.* No; for He is from all eternity, and shall endure to all eternity.

Q. Where is God?—*A.* Everywhere, and in all things.

Q. Is not the Father God?—*A.* Yes.

Q. Is not the Son God?—*A.* Yes.

Q. Is not the Holy Ghost God?—*A.* Yes.

Q Dost thou not therefore say there are three Gods?—*A.* I do not say three Gods, but three Persons, and one only God.

Q. Who begat the Son?—*A.* God the Father; but the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father, and takes from the Son.

Q. Pray show me some similitude how three Persons can be in one Deity?—*A.* The sun, though he be but one substance, yet in him are three distinct things, rotundity, light, and heat, thus also we believe that in one God there are three Persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, equal in all things.

Q. Of these three Persons which was born for our redemption?—*A.* The second Person, viz., the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. How many nativities had He?—*A.* Two.

Q. Which were they?—*A.* His first nativity was from the Father, without mother, without time. The second from the Virgin Mary, our Lady, without Father, in time, and always remaining a Virgin.

Q. Is Jesus Christ our Lord a man, or is he truly God?—*A.* God.

and Man both in one Person, without separation and without change, without confusion or co-mixture.

It will be seen that this is a somewhat searching catechism, and that by adducing the curious example of the sun the Ethiopic priests provided for the inability of uncivilised minds to comprehend anything without the aid of a practical illustration.* Even European minds often are unable to realise those things of which they cannot have an example, and I have known men of undoubted talent who could never understand the first definitions in Euclid. With the Abyssinians the necessity of having everything that is told them illustrated by something else is peculiarly apparent, and contradictory though it may appear, the traveller who speaks to them most in parables, will waste less speech and more quickly attain his object, than he who speaks straight to the point. It matters little whether the deduction from the parable be a logical one or not, so long as it practically exemplifies the matter in hand, and we see in Scripture how often parables were used to carry conviction to the minds of the Jews, a race from which I believe there is little doubt the Abyssinians are descended.

Though Abyssinia, being encompassed by difficult mountain passes, is so isolated from the outer world, one or two Europeans have from time to time made their home there. We were sitting one morning in

* St. Patrick is said to have used the three-leaved shamrock to illustrate the Trinity to the pagan Irish.

our tent, when we heard the jingle of a mule's harness, and saw an old man riding towards it accompanied by his servants and *gasha-zagries*. His aquiline nose, lofty forehead, and long white beard, flowing down almost to his waist, gave him the look of some patriarch of old, an effect which was enhanced by a pointed turban of white muslin, which he wore on his head. He was, however, no other than Dr. Schimper, or I should say Baron Schimper de Furtenbach, a German savant, who has lived more than thirty-seven years in Abyssinia, studying the botany and geology of the country. He told us he had also travelled much in other lands, and when he was a young man was wrecked in the Adriatic and had to swim to shore, having lost everything, except some letters of introduction, which he carried in his mouth. He afterwards travelled all through Egypt, and then penetrated into Asia, journeying all down the coast of Arabia, and passing under the very walls of Mecca, at great personal risk, and at last he had come to Abyssinia where he had married, and remained ever since pursuing his favourite studies, and occasionally sending word to Europe of some new discovery in the botanical world.

Dr. Schimper's conversation was, of course, very interesting, and I am indebted to him for some of the names, altitudes, &c., which are here mentioned. He had built himself a study in his own court-yard at Adowa, which was full of inventions of his own; his candles were of beeswax cast in paper moulds round wicks of native cotton cloth, his pipe was a wonderful

combination of wood, metal and clay, and by bottling tedge, with the addition of brandy and sugar, he had succeeded in making good champagne.

Dr. Schimper, the Italian carpenter Narreti, and a lay missionary, who had married a daughter of Dr. Schimper's by his Abyssinian wife, were the only Europeans I met at Adowa. We called on the lay missionary one day, when he was preparing for a feast on the occasion of the christening of his child, the arrangements for which were primitive in the extreme. Along the middle of the floor of the big room of the house a number of boards had been placed, with a white cloth over them, on which were heaped over *three hundred* pieces of native bread. In a hut in the court yard four girls were hard at work pounding up corn to make sauce; while a goodly array of huge earthen jars, full of *tella*, completed the entertainment. Indeed so liberal was the supply of *tella* that if the guests, who were principally priests, drank it all, I fear they must have sacrificed their sobriety to their desire to do honour to their host. I am told they sometimes do so, though it takes, I should say, at least two gallons of *tella* to make an Abyssinian drunk.

An Abyssinian household generally lodges in a single room, but there are various nooks and recesses in it which each have their separate purpose; one of these always serves as a stable, and is devoted to the mules, horses and sheep—if there be any—who thus live on terms of the greatest intimacy with the family. A curtain often screens the master's bed at the end of

the room, the servants being generally left to sleep on the floor or in one of the little huts which stand in the court-yard. As for the chickens and children they are ubiquitous and go where they like, the latter being mostly innocent of all clothing.

In a clever French novel, called the "Croix de Berny," there is an eccentric young poet, who always keeps his horse in his bedroom; this is truly an Abyssinian taste; in "the camp, the court, the grove,"—as Scott sings—the horse and his master share the same room, the same water, and often the same food. If an Abyssinian be travelling he rides a mule, the horse being only used for warfare. On the march the horse, fully caparisoned, with a scarlet cloth over his high-peaked saddle, is led in front by a shield-bearer, whose special duty is to attend to it, and have it ready for his master to mount in case of danger. The poor mules, however, are not so well treated; an Abyssinian will think nothing of making them continue to work with the most frightful ulcers on their backs, the very smell of which is unbearable in the hot weather, and mules in Abyssinia appear to be born—like donkies in England—to an inheritance of hard work, rewarded by hard blows. Notwithstanding this, a good mule—owing to the badness of the roads—is more valuable in Abyssinia than a horse, and will generally fetch 25 to 60 dollars, while a good horse can be bought easily for 30. Of course mules and horses that are exceptionally good such as those the king has for his own use, often fetch much higher prices. I bought at Adowa a horse for 30

dollars (£6), he was a handsome bay, about fourteen hands high, and proved himself just as clever as a mule in climbing over the tremendous mountain passes between Tigrè and Amhara, where a single false step would have been fatal. In Abyssinia neither horse nor mule is ever shod, and on the slippery side of a mountain they are far more sure-footed than a man in shooting boots. I have frequently found it best to trust to their sagacity to carry me safely, on dark nights, over dangerous places, which on foot I should have been hardly able to pass.

On my new horse being first brought to the camp, he reared up and fought desperately with my servants whenever they tried to approach him with the English saddle and bridle. He was so strong and active that, even when his leg was tied up with a stirrup leather, on Rarey's plan, it was still quite impossible to put any harness on him, and it was only by concealing the English saddle under a native one that we at last got him to let us place it on his back; by blindfolding his head in a *kuarie*, we succeeded in slipping an ordinary double bridle into his mouth, but he was so afraid of my European dress that they had to keep his eyes covered while I approached him. Once, however, I was on his back, and he felt how much less the English bridle hurt him than the cruel ring bit of the natives, instead of dashing wildly off down the hill, as I had expected, he became as gentle as a lamb, and would ever afterwards obey implicitly the lightest movement of the rein. I have followed all the doublings of an

antelope, flying over rough ground at its utmost speed, and have been astonished at the intelligence with which my horse would follow, of his own accord, every movement of the game; and turn sharp round at full gallop if it chanced to double back. The Abyssinians have a habit of suddenly reining their horses back on their haunches when they are going at speed, to display their horsemanship, but this destroys their hind legs, and, in Abyssinia, few horses that have been ridden much, are thoroughly sound. The ring bit too, often injures the under jaw, and I have *never once* met with an Abyssinian or Arab horse that did not *on the first trial* appreciate the English bridle, and go ten times better with it than with the bit it was accustomed to. It would be hardly possible to adduce a stronger instance in favour of our system of bitting, as compared with systems used by the Spaniards and the Arabs, two peoples famous for their good horses and good horsemen.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW DOM PEDRO COVILHAM DISCOVERED A MARE'S NEST, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

VENICE, in the days of her prosperity, when her galleys still struck terror into the hearts of the Turks, and the great art geniuses of Italy loved to decorate her palaces, was the favourite resort of men of learning, rank, and wealth, from all parts of the Christian world. Towards the close of the 15th century, one Peter, Prince of Portugal, returning from a visit thither, brought with him a treatise, by Palus Venitus, on the affairs of India, wherein, says Ludolphus, "many things were more especially and magnificently written," concerning the famous Prester John, a Christian prince, who was supposed to have his empire in Asia, and to be the most powerful, great, and wealthy emperor in the whole world, being looked upon by many as a sort of second pope. With Prince Peter's purchase of this work, by Palus Venitus, the affairs of Abyssinia seem, strangely enough, to have been intimately connected, for the accounts which the Portuguese heard of Prester John was one of the chief inducements which led them to pursue their search for a passage by sea to India: a search which had been commenced by Henry, the son of

John the First of Portugal, owing to his having read in the works of the ancients, that Hanno, the Carthaginian, by sailing out of the Straits of Gibraltar, came at length into the Red Sea, and had sent ships into the unknown Atlantic Ocean to explore the coasts of Africa. John the Second, desiring to pursue these discoveries, and more especially to find the empire of Prester John, sent for two Portuguese, by name Pedro Covilham and Alphonso Payva, who were men learned in Eastern languages, and he commissioned them to travel into India and see what discoveries they could make, directing them particularly to seek out the famous Emperor Prester John, and try to secure his alliance, as a Christian prince.

The Portuguese were at this time some of the most daring navigators and explorers in the world. Covilham and Payva started on their journey, and travelled through Egypt and India in several directions, ever searching vainly for tidings of Prester John and the sea road to India. Years passed, and finally Payva, grown weary of travelling, returned home, or according to some writers died, but the brave Covilham determined to continue his search alone. At last, about the year 1490, being then in the Red Sea, he heard of a most potent Christian King of Ethiopia, who used to carry the cross in his hands, and whose subjects greatly favoured the Christian religion, if indeed they did not follow it. This at once made Covilham imagine he had discovered Prester John; he thought that it was of little importance whether that prince lived in Asia or Africa so

long as he found him, and he at once wrote to the King of Portugal to tell him that he had at last discovered the Christian Emperor Prester John, whose people were called the Abyssinians, and that he was proceeding with all expedition to his court. I believe that Covilham had also at this time heard, during his travels in India, of the passage round the Cape of Storms, but Barthelemy Diaz had already carried to Portugal the news of its discovery on his return to Lisbon, in December, 1487, the very year that Covilham and Payva had started on their journey. The news of the finding of the celebrated Prester John soon spread all over Europe, and was generally believed. Learned men began to discover reasons for the name in the language of Ethiopia. The Portuguese were proud to rank this among their many famous discoveries, and when they at last found out their mistake it was too late to rectify it, and it became a matter of national vanity to uphold the theory that Abyssinia was the country of Prester John, a name which she continued to go by for many years, and which secured to her the friendship and alliance of Portugal.

An important era in the history of Ethiopia was therefore developed by a very small event. Had not the Prince of Portugal read Palus Venitus, Covilham would probably not have been charged to look for Prester John, and had he not jumped at too hasty a conclusion, the Portuguese would in all likelihood never have gone into Abyssinia. It was only a light *coup d'éventail* that brought about the fall of Algiers, and, if historians speak true, the fates of nations and

of hundreds of thousands of lives as well, have often depended on the digestion of a prince, or some equally trivial matter.

Dom Pedro Covilham penetrated into Abyssinia, and was detained there by the king, who, like Theodorus, could not bear to part with a man who, to his semi-barbarous mind, appeared possessed of so many wonderful secrets, and we may be sure that Covilham on his side did all he could to impress the Abyssinians with an idea of the greatness of the Portuguese. Bruce tells us that for more than twelve hundred years before the arrival of Covilham Abyssinia was an unknown country, at least to Europeans, but the natives seem to have practised nevertheless *some* of the Christian virtues, for when the Portuguese went there, they gave them the name of "the kind people."

For some time Abyssinia was only known to the Portuguese from the reports of Covilham, but the King of Portugal called himself the friend of the King of Ethiopia, and when David III., of Abyssinia, being threatened with invasion by the governor of Zeila, in the Adal country, sent to Dom Emanuel, of Portugal, to beg his alliance and help, a Portuguese mission was dispatched to treat with him. But by the time it arrived the people of Adal had been signally defeated in a pitched battle, and King David, like a true African, now that he no longer wanted the assistance of the Portuguese ambassadors, gave them a cold reception, and sent them back disgusted. Zeila, however, in time had a new governor in the person of a

giant called Graign,* said to have been nine feet high, who was a mighty warrior, and soon threatened Abyssinia with a fresh invasion. King David now bethought him of the Portuguese, whose formidable soldiers had the thunder and lightning at their command, and once more in the time of his need he sent to beg for their aid. But King David was dead, and his successor, Claudius, on the throne, before the King of Portugal consented to send the desired help, and Cristobel da Gama—whom I presume was the son of the great Vasco—at last arrived with four hundred and fifty tried men at his back. Though their numbers were few, their matchlocks were all powerful, and in 1543 they succeeded in killing the giant Graign, and entirely routing his forces, but poor Dom Cristobel da Gama lost his life before his companions achieved this victory.

After the war the Portuguese adventurers were provided with mules, houses, and land, and their little colony now settled down in the country, and instructed the natives in the arts of cutting stone, building bridges, making mortar, painting frescoes, cultivating fruit trees, manufacturing gunpowder, and many other things, of which they had before little or no knowledge, and almost all of which they have now again forgotten.

The Portuguese settlers soon made the country assume a more civilised aspect; they built a mag-

* Graign's proper name was Mahomet Graign, which, according to Father Lobo, means Mahomet the Lame, but he is often spoken of simply as Graign.

nificent palace at Gondar, a cathedral at Axum, bridges over some of the rivers, and many other monuments, among which was the Jesuit convent of Fremona, the last place occupied by the Portuguese in Abyssinia, and the unfortunate cause of their final expulsion. An old historian, speaking of the buildings erected by the Portuguese, says, "The fathers of the society having designed their European structures before, carried an architect with them out of India, and having found out lime, unknown to the Habessines for so many ages, built churches and their colleges of stone and mortar, and encompassed them with high walls, to the amazement and dread of the Habessines, lest they should in time be made so many impregnable forts and castles. But there was nothing which they so much admired as the palace which they built for the king, of which the chief architect was Peter Pays, both labourer and work-master, both surveyor, carpenter, and mason himself, and instructor of others. A work which afterwards the people from all parts of Ethiopia, far and near, flocked to see." This was of course the famous palace of Gondar, which I shall have to describe hereafter.

Claudius during his reign seems to have protected the Portuguese: the Abyssinians were friendly with them, and went to their chapels. The women who married with the Europeans were allowed to go to mass, and Rome had great hopes of bringing Abyssinia over to the Catholic faith. But the Portuguese priests were too zealous; the natives soon became

distrustful of them, and at the death of Claudius, Menas, his successor, confiscated all the lands that had been given to the settlers, and the king of Portugal was obliged to allow them 12,000 patacks a-year. Unfortunately, also, for Dom Cristobel's colony, the Jesuits believed that a new field had opened to them in Abyssinia, and some of their order went over to that country, where their skilfully-conducted intrigues soon aroused the enmity of the Abyssinian priests, and the distrust of the people.* This feeling increased to such an extent, that at last a massacre of the Portuguese took place, those who escaped death being sold into slavery in other countries, and a law passed prohibiting their return to Abyssinia. Thus, within a hundred and fifty years of their first landing, the Portuguese settlers had all disappeared from the country; but the rapid improvement they made in it during their short stay is a sufficient testimony of what might be *now* done with Abyssinia, were she under the direction of a civilised power.

The Abyssinians had got rid of the Portuguese, but they were by no means free from misgivings about the result of their thus having taken the law into their own hands. The Portuguese had pushed their conquests in India with a skill and courage which had excited the admiration of all Europe, and the Abyssinians could

* Father Jerome Lobo says, the courtiers and governors began to "declare against us and persecute us as disturbers of the public tranquillity, who had come into Ethiopia with no other intention than to abolish the ancient laws and customs of the country, to sow divisions between father and son, and preach up a revolution."

not help foreseeing that a terrible vengeance probably awaited them. They therefore closed their mountain passes against all travellers, stopped all commerce with Europe, and—as they discovered one or two priests attempting to penetrate into the country in disguise—made a rule of giving every stranger who entered Abyssinia a wife, as they were aware the vows of the Catholic priests would not allow them to have one.

It is probable that so energetic a people as the Portuguese would not have allowed the massacre of their countrymen to go unavenged, had it not been that their attention was distracted from Abyssinia by the great discoveries which were then being made in the New World. However this may be, it is certain the Ethiopians remained so long unapproached and unapproachable in their mountain fastnesses, that their very existence became nearly a matter of story, and all sorts of marvels were related of their country. It was not till more than two centuries had passed that an adventurous Frenchman at last succeeded in entering Abyssinia. Then came Bruce's famous journey in 1771, when he drank to his sweetheart in what he triumphantly supposed to be the source of the Nile, though it was in reality only the water of the Abai—the source of the *Bahr-el-Azrek* (Blue Nile), or left branch of the river of Egypt.

Such, briefly, is the story of the Portuguese occupation of Abyssinia, so far as I have been able to gather it from various sources. Most of the old books about the country were written by the Jesuit fathers; but

their accounts of Abyssinia are so interlarded with exaggerated descriptions of its terrors, and with wild fables of the natives, on which no reliance can be placed, that it is often difficult to sift the truth from the fiction. Bolivas, one of these Jesuit authors, says that he saw the feather of a bird which was twenty spans (nearly fifteen feet) long, and three broad; the quill itself being three spans long, and as thick as an ordinary man's arm. This was probably the same bird that Sindibad is related to have been carried away by in the Arabic legends of *E'lf-ley'leh we-Ley'leh* (the Thousand and One Nights). It seems, however, that a tradition of such a bird exists in Africa; and Bolivas, like many other travellers, merely appropriated the story to himself. Tellezius, writing of the mountains of Abyssinia, says:—"They strike terror into the beholders; the Alps and Pyrenees, compared with the Abyssinian mountains, are but low hills. The mountains of Portugal," he quaintly adds, "though *very high*, are but trifles to them." He also firmly believes the abysses between the Abyssinian mountains go down to the centre of the earth. Ludolphus, writing in the seventeenth century, from the relations of the Abyssinian priest, Gregory, gives much true information; but he also gets rather wild over the mountains, and believes in unicorns and other marvels.*

Bruce's work is probably the best book that has ever been written about Abyssinia. It is true his maps are

* I abstain from speaking of the books written about Abyssinia since Bruce's time, as I have not space in a work of this kind to do them all justice.

all wrong, and his theories mostly so; but his descriptions of the people, and the parts of the country he saw, so far as I have been able to test them, seem very accurate. Nor am I aware that he, knowingly, makes any false statements; though at the time his book first appeared it was looked upon as a complete tissue of fables. There is, however, one statement in his work, about the eating of live cattle, which I have never been able to get confirmed; and as I have often been questioned about its truth, I trust I shall be pardoned for quoting here the two passages in his book which particularly refer to the subject. In the first he says:—"The drivers suddenly tript up the cow, and gave the poor animal a very rude fall upon the ground, which was but the beginning of her sufferings. One of them sat across her neck, holding down her head by the horns; the other twisted the halter about her fore feet; while a third, who had a knife in his hand, to my very great surprise, in place of taking her by the throat, got astride upon her belly before her hind legs, and gave her a very deep wound in the upper part of the buttock." He goes on to say:—"I saw, with the utmost astonishment, two pieces, thicker and longer than our ordinary beef steaks, cut out of the higher part of the buttock." After a few remarks about the drivers, he proceeds:—"One of them still continued holding the head, while the other was busied curing the wound. This was done, not in an ordinary manner: the skin which had covered the flesh which was taken away was left entire and flapped over the wound, and

this was fastened to the corresponding part by two skewers or pins. Whether they had put anything under the skin, I know not; but at the river side, where they were, they had prepared a cataplasm of clay, with which they covered the wound. They then forced the animal to rise, and drove it on before them, to furnish them with a fuller meal when they should meet their companions in the evening."

The act which Bruce here describes (supposing it to have been possible), might have been only an exceptional piece of barbarity on the part of some soldiers; but, as if to drive such an idea from our minds, and to impress upon us that eating live cattle was a universal practice in Abyssinia, he gives the following description of a feast:—"A long table is set in the middle of a large room, and benches beside it for a number of guests who are invited. Tables and benches the Portuguese introduced amongst them; but bull hides spread upon the ground served them before, as they do in camp and country now. A cow or bull,* one or more, as the company is numerous, is brought close to the door, and his feet strongly tied. The skin that hangs down under his chin and throat, which I think we call the dew-lap in England, is cut only so deep as to arrive at the fat, of which it totally consists, and, by the separation of a few small blood-vessels, six or seven drops of blood only fall upon the ground. They have no stone, bench, nor altar, upon which these cruel

* The Abyssinians now only consider *cows'* flesh fit for a feast.

assassins lay the animal's head in this operation;—I should beg his pardon, indeed, for calling him an assassin, as he is not so merciful as to aim at the life, but, on the contrary, to keep the beast alive till he be totally eat up.

"Having satisfied the Mosaical law according to his conception, by pouring these six or seven drops upon the ground, two or more of them fall to work on the back of the beast, and on each side of the spine they cut skin-deep; then putting their fingers between the flesh and the skin, they begin to strip the hide of the animal half way down his ribs, and so on to the buttock, cutting the skin wherever it hinders commodiously to strip the poor animal bare. All the flesh on the buttocks is cut off then, and in solid, square pieces, without bones, or much effusion of blood; and the prodigious noise the animal makes is a signal for the company to sit down to table." (Bruce's Travels, Vol. III., Chap. XI.)

After severely ridiculing the exaggerations of which Jerome Lobo is guilty in his book, Bruce also says:—"I pledge myself never to retract the fact here advanced, that the Abyssinians do feed in common upon live flesh, and that I myself have, for several years, been partaker of that disagreeable and beastly diet."

Such were the statements made by the great traveller on his return from Abyssinia, statements which caused him to be mercilessly ridiculed, to have his honour impugned, and every word he said disbelieved. Were it not that I cannot believe that a gentleman like

Bruce, who had written a uniformly truthful book, could sit down and stain its pages with a deliberate lie, I, too, should have unhesitatingly said his story was false. While I was in Ethiopia, I was very desirous to find out the truth of the matter, and repeatedly questioned the Abyssinians about the custom of eating live flesh; but they all strenuously denied that such a practice *ever* existed, and declared that their oldest men remember no such custom, though some of them are said to be more than a hundred years of age, and would therefore have been children in Bruce's time. I have heard that soldiers on the march will sometimes hamstring cattle, and fall to cutting them up without waiting to kill them properly; but that they should be able to cut large steaks off live oxen, and then drive them quietly on again, seems almost incredible. I have more than once had occasion to mention how wild and intractable our oxen were on the march: what they would have been if we had tried to cut sandwiches off them *en route*, may be left to the imagination of the reader.

It also appears to me that the Abyssinians are —if in any way changed—rather *less* civilized than in Bruce's time a hundred years ago; for many of the customs and ceremonies which he mentions as being adhered to by the king and his noblemen, appear now to have fallen into disuse, and benches and tables are luxuries I never saw either at Adowa, or even when I was staying with the king himself; but if we credit Bruce, we must believe that the Abyssinians

have greatly advanced in civilization—concerning the eating of live flesh at least—and that the custom of the country has entirely changed. Now it is easy to imagine that a people who have been continually engaged in internal warfare should become less civilized, but it is difficult to believe that all trace of a universal custom could disappear in less than a century, and that, if it had ever existed, none of the writers on Abyssinia, either before or after Bruce's time, would have mentioned it. And I believe none of them have, though they speak of the Abyssinians eating raw meat, a sight which I myself have seen.* So far as my own experience goes, I have not been able to hear of a single instance, in Abyssinia, of a feast such as Bruce describes; and it is certainly not *now* the custom of the natives to eat live flesh. Such is the evidence contradicting Bruce's story, but there are some things to be said in favour of it also. In the first place, the Abyssinians certainly are fond of devouring raw flesh, and like it almost warm from the cow. Secondly, I have seen, in the Spanish bull-rings, horses, which, though they had been frightfully gored by the bull, would yet allow themselves to be ridden quietly up to within a yard of his horns, and stand firm while he charged them again: and if a horse will show such patience and docility under suffering, it is not impossible that a cow might do the same. Thirdly. As the Abyssinians are often cruel to their mules with sore backs, and cruel to their enemies, I do not think it likely they would

* See Appendix, note C.

allow compassion for their cows to influence their mode of eating them. And last, not least, it seems improbable that Bruce would have boldly asserted a story which covered him with ridicule and obloquy, if it had been false. I believe, therefore, that Bruce—notwithstanding the evidence against him seems stronger than that in his favour—really saw what he relates, but that he exaggerated greatly, and made an error in calling the eating of live flesh *the common practice* of the country: in fact, he admits himself that his host of Adowa never ate it. Of course, my belief in Bruce's story is only a personal opinion; the mystery which hangs over the truth or falsehood of his statements remains for others to solve; and I can only say, in the language of Peter Pindar, that *I* have not

> "Been where men—what loss, alas!
> Eat half a cow and turn the rest to grass.'

CHAPTER X.

CAMP LIFE AT ADOWA—*continued.*

As the weather was very hot during our stay at Adowa, we sent for a native tailor to make us some clothes of the white cotton cloth of the country. I remember once ordering a West-end tailor to make me a militia officer's uniform, and his accounting for an inaccuracy in it by saying that in *his* regiment the dress was different, thereby delicately intimating that he was a brother in arms, or at least the ninth part of one, and could wield in her Majesty's service something sharper than his shears. It was on the same principle, I suppose, that the Abyssinian maker of garments always went about followed by his gasha-zagry, or esquire, bearing his shield and spear. He was also a great exquisite, and instead of platting his hair after the common fashion of the country, wore it gracefully curling all over his head; but his gallant and elegant appearance did not, I am sorry to say, prevent his being a very bad tailor, and when he had finished our clothes they burst as soon as we tried to get into them, for not knowing how to cut them out, he had hit on the happy thought of fitting them on his own person, which was almost as long and thin as a palm tree; he also sewed buttons

promiscuously all over our dresses, as if he had scattered them from a pepper-box, which had a very picturesque effect. Besides being the Mr. Poole of Adowa, he was also the saddler and veterinary surgeon, in which last capacity, to do him justice, he was rather clever. One day he offered to operate on a soft swelling which my brother's horse had on its back, and as he declared he required no assistance of any kind, we watched him rather curiously to see how he would make the poor beast stand the painful ordeal. His first care was to hobble the fore and hind feet of the horse, then, taking a long thong of raw hide, he tied it in a slip knot round the two cords which bound them, and pulled it tight till the horse's feet were drawn so close together under its body that it was forced to sink on its knees, after which he secured the thong, and laying the horse on its side, made two cuts with one of our razors in the swelling, and having cleansed it thoroughly of all the matter it contained, branded it with the red-hot blade of a grass-cutter's knife, thus completely drying up the tumour and enabling the horse to bear the saddle again in a very few days.

The Abyssinian cure for rheumatism is almost as summary. They take a number of hollow reeds, and applying them to the affected part, fill them with boiling butter, so as to burn a hole in the skin: an operation which produces so much pain that, if it does not cure the patient, he at least is content to suffer the disease patiently for the rest of his life, thinking its agonies a mere trifle in comparison to the cure. Boil-

ing butter is a great specific in the pharmacopœia of the Abyssinians. When they amputate the right hand and left foot of a thief, they rapidly cut with a sharp knife through the joint of the wrist and ankle, and dip the stump several times in boiling butter, which is left to harden on it; the bleeding is thus stopped, and when, after the lapse of some days, the coating of butter is removed, the wound is generally healed. I was told that many people survived the double amputation when subjected to this treatment; but it must be remembered that the Abyssinians *always* amputate a limb at one of the joints, after the manner of an expert carver, and therefore never attempt an operation above the knee or elbow; they must, however, be very rapid in their movements, as they do not, I believe, ever think of ligaturing a limb above the joint where it is to be cut off.

Day after day passed at our camp, and the sun blazed down on the valley of Adowa with blinding heat; the flies congregated thicker and thicker in our tents, and the dogs howled all night long, except when the hysterical laugh of a hyena, seizing his prey, awed them into a momentary silence. No rain fell, but great thunder-clouds gathered over the mountains in ominous masses—

> "There was a feeling of suspense
> In Nature, a mysterious sense
> Of terror in the air;"

and the whole atmosphere was often so highly charged with electricity that our blankets crackled and flashed

in the dark as if they were covered with phosphorus. Still the storm did not break, and the dry earth was covered with innumerable cracks and fissures, and every blade of grass was withered to the colour of straw, except by the banks of the river, where we sent our mules to feed every day. The country people brought us occasional presents of game, honey, or fish, which last they captured like the gipsy poachers, by throwing a herb into the water of the river, which intoxicated the fish and made them float to the surface. The generosity of the natives was, however, not quite disinterested, as they always expected, in return, a present of *greater* value than that which they had given. Their offerings therefore partook too much of the character of the white elephant to be encouraged.

Amongst the other disadvantages of not having our baggage, our stock of soap ran short, and we were forced to use the Abyssinian substitute—viz., the seed of a certain plant,* which, when mashed into a fine powder and mixed with water, makes a sufficiently good lather to clean linen, though it does not render it very white.

We made a point of riding out every afternoon to shoot and take exercise in the plains around Adowa, for those who once yield to the enervating influences of a tropical climate, and cease to take plenty of exercise, soon lose their health; and Africa, though her scenery is as beautiful as a poet's dream, is truly a hell upon earth to a sick man.

* *Pircunia Abyssinica*, called by the natives *Shivti*.

Among the many pretty spots round Adowa, one especially took our fancy. It was a glen in the mountains, with a small rivulet flowing through it, which alternately sparkled in miniature cascades over great granite rocks, or formed into deep clear brown pools, peopled by myriads of tiny silver fish; here and there tufts of bright green grass and gay-coloured flowers dipped into the water, or formed little emerald islands in the centre of the stream, along the banks of which grew clusters of graceful palms, whose dark, feathery foliage afforded a grateful shade from the noon-day heat. Gorgeous butterflies and beautiful little sun birds (the African humming bird) flitted among the sweet-scented flowers, carolling gaily all day long, making altogether such a picture, under the saphirine blue of the sky above, as one may perhaps *imagine* after reading the glowing account of some tropical paradise, but alas! too rarely ever sees realised. In this charming spot we used often to pass the hottest part of the day—

> "Drinking at noontide's balmy hours
> Sweet opiates from the meadow flowers;"

but our efforts to sketch our favourite glen were not very successful, for under an Eastern sun the colours often dry on the brush before it reaches the paper, or, if you employ much water, a colony of flies are sure to settle on your sky and commence sucking it up. A thermometer at 110° Fahr. in the shade makes the artist far more inclined to enjoy the beauties of a view in complete repose than to undertake the exertion neces-

sary to depict it, even were there any hopes of his being able to do so successfully, for all colours look so much more vivid in the clear bright atmosphere of the East, that a sketch which, in Africa, only faintly renders the rich tints of the landscape, when viewed under an English sky appears ridiculously over-coloured, and requires either to be toned down till it loses all semblance of its original self, or to be left a thing which shocks the eye, from the violent contrast it offers to all surrounding objects.

Behind Adowa there are some rich pastures, and the King's chief interpreter has the right of charging a dollar for every head of cattle sent to graze in them during the year, which affords him a good income. Other parts of the valley are tilled for the growing of corn, but no vegetables are grown in the neighbourhood, nor have any of the houses gardens. In this there is a great difference between the Abyssinians and the Moors, who decorate their houses, and cultivate their gardens, while the Abyssinians seem to be perfectly indifferent to the beautiful flowers and fruits that grow around them, and to hold architecture and agriculture in equal contempt.

There are two or three little villages on the sides of the hills round the vale of Adowa, and near one of these, called Mai Gogua, from the river which flows by it, are still to be seen the grey walls of the ill-fated Jesuit convent of Fremona. Most of the habitable part has been destroyed, and the ivy has forced its way through the fissures between the stones, but the solid

masonry of the foundations remains unshaken, and by its strength testifies how little the builders of the convent imagined for what a brief space their Order would occupy the pile they raised with so much care and labour. Had they colonized the country and been content to seek the love and confidence of the people, and by their precept and example teach them the practical benefits of civilization, all their objects might long ago have been achieved, and the name of Fremona be now remembered with love and reverence by a civilized Abyssinia. But heedless of the injunction "Thou shalt not do evil that good may come," they blindly pursued an intriguing policy, content to justify its present evils by the prospect of the good that would accrue to Abyssinia in the *end*, when she was a child of Rome.* Shakespeare has truly said—

"Most dangerous is that temptation that does goad us on to sin, in loving virtue."

These men forgot, as all who do a present wrong for a future good do forget, that no human eye can fore-

* In the account of an interview between the Portuguese Patriarch of Ethiopia and Dom Pedro da Silva, we are told—"He represented the urgent necessity of assisting the rise, and cherishing the growth, of the Catholic religion, but the methods he proposed discovered more of the spirit of the warrior than the bishop or missionary. He declared it as his opinion, that Mazna and Arkiko ought to be seized, a strong citadel to be built, and maintained by a numerous garrison; that one of the Princes of Abyssinia ought to be got into Catholic hands by winning over or conquering the commander that kept him prisoner, that he ought to be set on the throne, and a civil war by that means be raised in Abyssinia."—"A Voyage to Abyssinia," by Father Jerome Lobo, sequel, chap. ii.

see the future; and as a castle built on a foundation of sand sinks to the ground, so all their toil, instead of securing the happy future to Abyssinia they had counted on, only brought about their own massacre, the misery and expulsion of their countrymen, and the abandonment of the country to a worse state of barbarism than that in which they had found it. Yet not alone as a memorial of human shortsightedness has Fremona a melancholy interest; we know that among those who lived there were some truly good and wise men, of whose unswerving faith and self-sacrifice this battered ruin is the only monument.

It is wonderful how soon the traces of a battle disappear. Since the Abyssinian campaign, Prince Kassa fought a great battle near Adowa, with a rival chief, called Gobasie, but a few curious-looking bones bleaching in the sunshine are all that now remain to tell of the deeds of "derring-do" that were done that day; it is only the field of Waterloo that seems to have an exhaustible supply of relics found upon it. However, to return to our subject: at the time of the English expedition to Abyssinia, Gobasie, as well as Kassa, had thrown off the allegiance of Theodorus, and our English General sent to ask Gobasie to come and see him, in the hopes of gaining his assistance and co-operation; but Gobasie was strongly gifted with the distrustful nature of his countrymen, and, supposing that the English only wished to get the better of him, kept carefully out of the way, while Kassa, who was of a more confiding disposition, made friends with General

Napier, and rendered him what assistance he could to procure forage for the army, and even went so far as to order the people of some parts of his country, through which the British troops had to pass, to accept rupees in payment for their goods, which was tantamount to bidding them give them away, as the Abyssinians believe in no coin but the Maria Teresa dollar of 1780, and considering the rupees worthless, except as ornaments, gave them to their little children to make necklaces with. Truly does La Rochefoucauld say, "*le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, c'est de le dépasser,*" and Gobasie soon learned how prejudicial to his interests had been his over-caution, for, when the English troops retired, Kassa received from General Napier a present of some brass howitzers and several hundred muskets of the kind formerly used by our Indian troops, while Gobasie had to remain content with the shields and spears which his men already possessed. Of course the acquisition of so many guns made Kassa stronger than his neighbours, and enabled him to secure his position on the throne of Tigre, and even carry the war into the enemy's country when necessary, but Gobasie had bought over some of Kassa's chieftains, and determined to try whether, by fighting, he could not gain the principality of Tigre for himself. According to the laws of Abyssinian chivalry, when one chieftain wishes to fight another, he challenges him to a pitched battle, and they draw lots for the choice of ground. On this occasion, the choice falling

to Prince Kassa, he decided to fight the battle at his ease, close to his capital. K., who was General of the forces, chose a position for his troops on the side of a mountain, where, as he said, *they* could not run away, and yet every facility was offered to the *enemy* for doing so. These dispositions having been made, Prince Kassa waited calmly for the appointed day when Gobasie was to come out and fight him; of course it was understood that whoever gained the battle would have the country of the other, for in Abyssinia not a few of the old laws of chivalry exist, and the victor becomes master of the person and property of the vanquished. At last the momentous day arrived when the two armies were to meet, but it seems the engagement bore some resemblance to the famous battle of Sheriffmuir, of which the Scottish bard only tells us that—

> "One thing is sure:
> That at Sheriffmuir
> A battle there was that I saw, man;
> And they ran, and we ran,
> And we ran, and they ran,
> And then we a' ran awa, man,"

for nearly all Kassa's troops, with the exception of about two thousand of General K.'s own men, had been bought over by Gobasie, while, on the other hand, Kassa's agents had not failed, by way of requital, to buy as many of Gobasie's men as they could. Kassa's artillery-men also were Turks, and having no feelings of sympathy with Abyssinia, had readily taken a bribe

to fire over the enemy's heads, and hurt nobody. It is therefore doubtful what might have been the issue of the fight, had it not been for K.'s two thousand faithful men, who really did fire into the enemy, and seemed so much in earnest that Gobasie's troops fled before them, and Kassa's wavering battalions naturally joining the winning side, completed their discomfiture so effectually, that Gobasie was taken prisoner, and, as there are no prisons in Abyssinia, sent to live on the top of a steep and isolated mountain, accessible only by one narrow and guarded path, according to the usual custom of the country. After this, Prince Kassa soon felt himself strong enough to assume the triple crown of the Emperors of Ethiopia, or "kings of kings," as they proudly style themselves; a title which sounds somewhat boastful to Europeans, who are accustomed to associate the name of King of Kings only with that of the Most High.

Besides being the most powerful, and also perhaps the most intelligent, Prince in Abyssinia, Kassa had as much right, in point of descent, to the crown of Ethiopia, as King Theodorus had, for they both claimed to be descended from Solomon, the reputed founder of the royal line of Ethiopia.* Neither Theodorus nor Kassa were the direct heirs to the crown, but in Abyssinia, though the king is always supposed to belong to the family of Solomon, he is by no means always the eldest representative of that family, a mere child being

* See Appendix, note D.

sometimes elected to the throne by the people in power at the old king's death, in order that they may enjoy a long regency. I may as well here relate how Solomon is supposed to have become the progenitor of the kings of Abyssinia.

The Abyssinians say that the Queen of Sheba was no other than the Queen of Ethiopia, and that she, having heard—from her merchants who traded on the Red Sea—of the great wisdom and power of King Solomon, went, with many presents and a large retinue, to visit him at his own court, where she remained some time, and learned the worship of God according to the Jewish law. After her return, she had a son, of whom Solomon was the father, and this Prince was sent to Jerusalem, where he was carefully educated, and when he was grown up was named King of Ethiopia, and sent back to his country, accompanied by many learned doctors of the law and noble Israelites, among whom was Azaria, the son of Zadok, the high priest. These noble Jews, however, do not seem to have set a very good example to the young King whom they accompanied, for, happening to find the temple carelessly guarded before they left Jerusalem, they are said to have carried away with them the Ark of the Covenant, together with the tables of the Ten Commandments. The Abyssinians believe these stories, but how far they are true, I, of course, cannot say, as I had no means of examining their records while I was in the country, and the accuracy of the Portuguese writers on these subjects cannot, I fancy, be relied on. However, the Abyssinians cer-

tainly appear to have some of the Jewish element in their composition, and many of the customs that were common among the ancient Jews are preserved in Abyssinia to this day.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT TO AXUM.

ONE day Ras Bariaü invited us to accompany him on a visit he was going to make to the ancient town of Axum, saying he would lend us mules, as our own had been sent to grass at a distance; however, the Ras's promises were most unstable things to repose any faith in, and it was not till the day that he was *returning* from his visit to Axum that we were able to get the mules, for I really believe the Abyssinians would find life too long if they did not contrive to stretch out over two or three days what might be easily accomplished in one hour. At last we started, taking K.'s servant, Tedla, as guide and interpreter, and rode in a westerly direction along the valley of Adowa, till we reached the stream called Mai Gogua.* - There are few things more obstinate than a mule, though I remember my old tutor was ungallant enough to say that a woman was *mulier*, and on the present occasion my mule was the muliest that ever refused to obey its rider; in fact, it took nearly an hour to get her across the first brook, and at every other there was a pitched battle. Had the beast been a witch, she could not have objected more to running water, and as

* *Mai Gogua*, the river of owls.

there was no lack of water on the road, my position was not a sinecure. Still proceeding nearly due west, we crossed several hills, some of which quite sparkled with rock crystals that lay scattered among the stones. Many of these crystals were very white, while others of a purple tint gleamed in the sun with the lustre of amethysts, and one might well have fancied oneself riding through the enchanted garden of Aladdin after a storm had shaken the jewelled fruit to the ground. Indeed, it is not impossible that some stones of value might be found in this neighbourhood if they were properly searched for, though we were unable to discover any. The natives used often to bring to our camp at Adowa large pieces of rock crystal, to which they attached a ridiculous value, but the pieces *they* collected were always the biggest and brightest bits they could find. Even among the most intelligent Abyssinians there are few who would know the difference between a diamond and a piece of cut glass, and uncut stones are naturally still more difficult to distinguish.

I remember once meeting an English officer who had been in the Imperial Treasury of the Summer Palace at Pekin when it was sacked, and had passed by a large heap of uncut precious stones, believing them to be of no value, yet he was a well educated English gentleman. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if we can put little trust in any of the native stories about the places where jewels, gold, &c., are to be found in Africa, though the natives who make these reports no doubt often believe in them themselves. They sometimes asked

me if I was not going to visit a country on the western frontier of Abyssinia, where emeralds as big as pigeon's eggs were to be had for the picking up; but in no instance did I find any of these tales could be substantiated, either by the reports of eye-witnesses or the production of the stones said to have been found.

We met great numbers of men and women on the road carrying baskets of bread, horns of *tedge*, carpets, skins, jars of *tella*, &c.; these were the retinue of the Ras, who was returning from Axum. Presently we came to a level plain covered with stones, as most Abyssinian plains are, and here we espied a gay party of Abyssinians on mules, riding towards us, with Ras Bariaü in their midst. The old chief carried a blue cotton umbrella, as became his rank, but the others had their heads bare; for though, when the sun is very hot, the Abyssinians sometimes draw their kuaries over their heads, they always uncover in the presence of a superior. It was now midday, and the sunlight playing on the scarlet and white kuaries, and the brass and silver ornaments of the mules, had a very pretty effect. Most of the cavaliers rode double, the man behind holding on to the waist of the man in front, their great curved swords sticking up in the air like tails, and giving them very much the effect of performing monkeys.

When the Ras saw us he stopped, and gave us his brother to accompany us back to Axum and introduce us to the Nebrid, or high priest, under whose jurisdic-

tion it is. The Ras's brother was not a blood relation, for the Ras called all people who were natives of the same village as himself, his brothers, and therefore had a large family of them.

At the other side of the plain were some hills of grey granite, at the foot of one of which we saw an obelisk of stone standing upright, like a granite sentinel guarding the ruins of the temple of Axum, which we were now approaching. The width of this monolith was greater than its depth, and there was no carving on any of the sides, but the lines were straight and sharp, as if they had just been cut by the chisel.

Axum, as I have already said, was the ancient capital of Tigre, and by some writers is supposed to have been formerly the metropolis of the Troglodyte Ethiopians, or Cushites, and the great emporium of the Indian and African trade. It possesses a cathedral, built by the Portuguese, besides which there are some fragments of what appears to have been a Greco-Ethiopic temple. Bruce said that he saw a stone with an inscription of the Ptolemies on it, but this we did not succeed in finding. The greatest curiosities at Axum are a number of gigantic monoliths in grey granite, which seem to have formed part of some great early Ethiopic temple of which little or nothing is now known. The town itself is merely a collection of round houses, with thatched roofs, which, unlike the houses at Adowa, are many of them surrounded by gardens, neatly fenced in with bamboo canes, which give the town a bright and cheerful aspect. It is situated at the side

of a grassy plain, and is sheltered by a sort of amphitheatre of granite hills, which, however, in summer reflect the heat of the sun and make it very hot. To provide against this, the Portuguese planted glades of cedars, which have now grown into very fine trees, and afford a refreshing shade. Most of the monuments have been cut from the granite of the surrounding hills, and there are also some caves scooped in the living rock, which appear to have been the commencement of subterranean tombs or temples which were never completed. As we rode towards the town we passed several square blocks of granite, which go by the name of throne stones, as one of them has been used as a throne by the kings of Ethiopia from time immemorial, according to the native traditions. Bruce avers he saw 133 of these stones, and believes them to have been pedestals for statues of Sirius, to whom he imagines the temple of Axum was dedicated; but the arguments by which he tries to support this theory are too lengthy to be discussed here. The throne stones we saw—and there were great numbers of them scattered about—were about 2½ ft. thick by 8 ft. square, though, as I have lost my diary, I am not quite sure of the measurements. There was a cube of stone rising from the middle of the upper side about the right height for a man to sit on; and in front of this seat two hollows were scooped in the surface of the larger block of the size and shape of a man's feet, and about 2 in. deep. On the top of the block which I have called a seat, a channel was cut 3 in. wide and 2 in. deep running parallel with the sides, and

looking as if it had been intended for sacrificial purposes; but it is difficult to decide exactly for what purpose these curious stones were really used. Some of them lay close to the mountain side, from which they had been cut, and were not yet finished: others had been carried some distance and then abandoned, while in the centre of the town were three or four apparently quite completed. While we were examining these last, a crowd collected around us, consisting principally of priests, who seemed to form the major part of the population of Axum. They were easily distinguishable by their white robes and turbans, and one of them courteously brought us some water from a well in his garden, for at Axum they have the rare luxury of wells, instead of drawing their water from brooks or ponds, as they do in most other parts of Abyssinia. After we had drunk the priest pointed out to us an Ethiopic inscription round one of the throne stones; it was apparently in Geez, but he was unable to tell us its meaning, nor do I think it would have thrown much light on the matter, as it had probably been added at a much later date to that at which the stone was first carved. Some of the stones of the old aboriginal temple were probably used to construct the Greco-Ethiopic temple which succeeded it; this temple has in turn been succeeded by the Portuguese cathedral, so that Axum has probably seen no less than three temples built out of the same materials, the first of which must have been of immense antiquity. At the present time one of the throne stones, which stands just in front of the cathedral, is used by the

kings of Ethiopia at their coronation, and the native histories say that they have been crowned on this stone ever since the days of Paganism. The Abyssinians, therefore, regard it with superstition. It is on this same stone that Bruce declares that he read the much-defaced inscription—

ΠΤΟΛΕΜΙΟΥ ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ
ΒΑΣΙΔΕΩΣ

but there are now no traces of this inscription visible. There are, however, two inscriptions in Geez describing the wars of King Tazena, still preserved at Axum; and there is, I believe, the effigy of a lion cut on a rock not far from the town, but I nowhere saw the representation of any living object carved on the ruins of the temple, nor were there any inscriptions on the obelisks;* but my brother was subsequently shown at a priest's house a stone which had an inscription on it in characters that were quite unknown to him, though, having studied hierology, he is acquainted with the forms of many of the ancient alphabets. Unfortunately, he could not procure a rubbing of this stone, and only obtained a sight of it with some difficulty. He was also shewn some silver coins which had been found near Axum: they bore on them the portrait of an Ethiopian king, and an inscription, apparently in Geez, but the priests had no knowledge of a time when there had been a native

* Markham, in his able book on the Abyssinian expedition, p. 4, speaks of an inscription "on the famous obelisk at Axum." This is a mistake, the Geez inscriptions I have mentioned above are not on the obelisk, which has no inscription of any kind on it.

currency, and simply said they were Mariam's coins—the Virgin Mary's coins, and that they fell down when it rained.

After a short consultation with Ras Bariaü's brother, one of the priests sent a messenger to apprise the Nebrid of our arrival, and in the meantime led us to see the cathedral, which was surrounded by a wall, enclosing a large churchyard, planted with rows of lofty cedars, which gave a pleasant fragrance to the air. The cathedral itself stood on a raised terrace, approached by a long flight of stone steps; at the foot of these was the stone I have mentioned, on which the kings of Ethiopia are still crowned, and there were also two broken slabs of stone let into the ground, which had evidently once formed part of some sculpture, as they had some spear-heads rudely carved on them in relief.

Leaving our guns with our servants outside the wall of the churchyard, we began ascending the flight of steps leading to the entrance of the cathedral. Bruce has hazarded the assertion that the Greco-Ethiopic temple originally surmounted these steps, which, by the way, were kissed most reverently by the priest who accompanied us; indeed, his whole progress up them was a long series of prostrations and osculations, and this ceremony had so often been performed on these stones that, though of hard granite, they had become quite smooth and polished with constant kissing. I have seen a similar instance of devotion at Rome, where the great toe of the famous statue of Saint Peter has been nearly kissed away by devout pilgrims.

The cathedral of Axum is a large oblong building of stone, taken mostly, I believe, from the ancient temples, the ruins of which were thus utilized by the practical Portuguese. At one corner stands a tower containing the staircase leading to the roof, and all the walls are battlemented, as in many old European churches. The roof is flat and paved with stone, and it is not improbable that the cathedral, like some of the European churches I have referred to, was designed to serve the double purpose of a church and stronghold in times of danger. The whole edifice has an air of solidity and completeness about it which showed that the Portuguese were no mean architects, especially when we take into consideration that *this* church was built in the midst of the Ethiopian mountains, with probably very little assistance from the natives, who know not, even now, how to cut stone, make mortar, raise scaffoldings, transport heavy weights, or even construct a simple arch.

At the top of the great flight of steps are three large wooden doors, through one of which we passed, after it had been duly kissed by the priest, and found ourselves standing in the body of the church. Two rows of square columns separate the aisles from the nave, and at the further end is the sanctuary, containing the altar, which is hidden from the view of the profane by two great folding doors. The building is lofty and very dimly lighted, but as soon as we got accustomed to the gloom we saw that the walls have been plastered and covered with native cloth on which portraits of various

saints and subjects from scriptural history have been painted in distemper. These paintings are rather Byzantine in their character, and very quaint, as many objects which are only to be seen in Ethiopia are introduced into almost all the pictures, though the saints are represented as white people. I suppose it was the Portuguese who instilled into the African mind a wholesome belief that the colour of the skin is indicative of the purity of the soul, and that therefore only white people are very good; for it is a curious fact that in every one of the paintings I have seen in Ethiopic churches, the saints are always represented *white*, while the poor sinners are painted so black that, if their deeds were only half as dark as their complexions, there must have been but little hope for them.* Apropos of black and white, there is a curious trait in the African character which deserves mention—I refer to the great contempt the dark races seem to have for their own colour. I am not aware that this feeling is shared by the red Indians, or the Asiatic races, but the African in his own country feels the greatest pride if he is a shade lighter than his fellows, and even when they are of the same colour one African will often speak of another with great contempt, as that *black* fellow. I noticed that my servant Mustafa, who was certainly two or three shades darker than many of the Abyssinians, always spoke of them as "those blacks" or

* I have since learned that there is also a common belief among the Moslims that the wicked will rise on the judgment day with their faces black.

"niggers" with an air of superiority which clearly implied that *he* was of quite a different and superior species; indeed he had deluded himself into a sweet conviction that his own complexion was beautifully fair, and once when he heard himself called my black dragoman, in contradistinction to the pale-faced Baulo, he was almost as much put out as an inhabitant of Espertina if you ask him the time. Lest the reader should be at a loss to know *why* the people of Espertina fly in a rage if you ask them the hour, I must relate here an anecdote which at least has the merit of brevity. Be it known, then, that Espertina is a village in that southern province of Spain called Andalusia, and stands on the high road to Huelva, not a hundred miles from the fair city of Seville. Like the family of Wallace, Espertina is so ancient that history does not go back to the time when it did not exist; however, local tradition—which is almost as veracious—avers that three sages travelling from the venerable city of Gotham were the original founders of the village, nor do the people of Espertina appear to be unworthy of such distinguished progenitors. Among their many virtues has always been a rooted abhorrence to that wild spirit of innovation which has spread over Europe with gigantic strides under the name of "the march of intellect," a march which, for very good reasons, the Espertinaites were fortunately quite incapable of.

Though Archimedes's ancient invention of toothed wheels was, I believe, already in use for the construction of clocks in the tenth century, for nearly nine

hundred years after that period the people of Espertina were content, like the monks of St. Viton, to know the time by the crowing of their cocks. Had not St. Stephen and St. Polycarp piously smashed to pieces the first clock on record,* because it showed the motions of the planets, unholy things with heathenish names? And should Espertina be numbered among those places that encouraged the profane sciences? Forbid it ye Powers!

Though revolution might have spread her baneful influence over the rest of Europe, *Gracios à Dios!* the people of Espertina, since the days of El Tarrick, had remained as notable for the simplicity of their manners, as for that of their understandings. It is related of them that when the French cuirassiers first passed through their village in 1808, they firmly believed that the steel helmets and cuirasses of those soldiers grew upon them as shells do on lobsters, and that it was useless to shoot at men thus protected by *nature*, indeed, they remained unshaken in this belief till, unfortunately for the cuirassiers, an enterprising *contrabandista* from Malaga, shot one of the French troopers in the neck, and having knocked him over, spread the report that, after all, they were *muy moldo* (very soft), if you only hit them in the right place; a discovery which nearly led to the extermination of the unfortunate plungers.

I have said that from time immemorial the good people of Espertina had been content to know the

* Supposed by some writers to have existed in the third century.

time of day by such simple signs as the crowing of their cocks, the light of the sun, &c.; but, alas! the spirit of innovation found its way at length even into this quiet hamlet, and, though no one ventured to suggest setting up a clock, in a rash moment the Alcalde sanctioned the erection of a sun-dial, and an artificer having been sent for from Seville, a beautiful gilt one was placed on the side of the church tower, to the admiration of the whole village and the envy of its neighbours; indeed, so much did the Espertinaites admire their new sun-dial that they thought it would be a pity that its beauty should be tarnished by the rain, so, having voted a special sum for the purpose, they sent for a carpenter and had a *roof placed over their sun-dial!* Since then it has always been a dangerous thing to ask any inhabitant of Espertina to tell you the hour.*

On one side of the great doors in front of the altar of the cathedral at Axum is painted, if I remember right, a colossal portrait of *Marian* (the Virgin Mary), and on the other St. George (the patron saint of Abyssinia) killing the dragon with his spear, and riding on a white horse, with the native Ethiopian *big toe* stirrups.

* Since writing this, I have heard that the same anecdote has been related of some other place. Foolish actions, like great ones, repeat themselves in history; but should any of my readers feel a doubt about the truth of this story, I have only to beg that they will ride into the village of Espertina, and, in a slightly mocking voice, ask the first person they meet to tell them the hour. Probably their doubts will be satisfied, though I confess I have never ventured on the experiment myself.

As I have lost my diary I have forgotten the subjects of the other pictures round the walls, but I remember that the colouring of most of them is very brilliant and characteristic. Some of these paintings have never been completed, and the black charcoal lines, where they have been sketched in, are still visible. Though all the paintings are in distemper, instead of being painted on the walls of the church they are painted on large pieces of cotton cloth stretched over them, which did not appear to be in the least decayed. The pillars separating the aisles are also similarly decorated.

While we were examining the paintings on these last a priest, in a bright red and yellow robe, came in, and burnt incense before the altar, repeating, in a loud voice, some sentences in his own language, which of course we did not understand. Our attention was now drawn to a wooden framework at one side of the church, somewhat like a great four-post bedstead; this was where the musicians sat, their principal instruments being apparently drums, which were piled up round it in considerable numbers. The author of the Abyssinian music was, I believe, a saint from the Semyen mountains, called Areed, who lived in the days of King Gebra Moskal, and is supposed to live still, though, if he ever heard much of his own music, I should think it highly improbable. Of course I should be sorry to deny that his music has charms to soothe the *savage* breast, but I fear one would have to become a savage oneself to be able to appreciate them.

It is unfortunate that an art education which enables us to see *some* new beauties in painting, poetry, or music we might not otherwise appreciate, at the same time incapacitates us from deriving enjoyment from *many* things which often afford much pleasure to the uninitiated, and, bad art being more common than good, teaches us to suffer painful impressions more frequently than pleasurable ones. To the Abyssinian the rude paintings in his churches, and the discordant music he hears, are all that is beautiful, and enable him to obtain a fore-glimmer of the Heaven to which he aspires; while to the educated European the music and painting of Ethiopia represent art in its rudest infancy, and he would rather hear a simple ballad of the Ethiopian serenaders than the jarring discords of the evensong at an Ethiopian church, which to the native devotee would probably seem a celestial harmony; for, as Crabbe says—

> "It is the soul that sees. The outward eyes
> Present the object, but the mind descries,
> And thence delight, disgust, or cool indifference rise."

Arcadian happiness perhaps consisted in Arcadian ignorance, and we should all be happier if we could derive unalloyed enjoyment from *everything;* but, were there no criticism there would be no improvement, and were man once to cast aside his great prerogative of self-improvement, I fear the world would soon be peopled only with animals in human form.

After visiting the flat roof of the church, which is

surmounted by a large brass cross of Byzantine shape, we went to see a little chapel which stands close by, in a small yard of its own, planted with shady groves of cedars, and boasting a well of fresh water. In this chapel were kept several of the old church books, all of which were in red leather bindings. One of the few arts which the Abyssinians have preserved is the art of binding their books, most of which are written on parchment. The characters are all separate, and so neatly traced in Indian ink with a reed pen that they look as if they had been printed. The ancient classical language of the country is Geez, but each province has now its own language, and in Tigre they speak Tigre, in Amhara Amharic, and so on throughout Ethiopia. Besides the ecclesiastical library we saw some small paintings on parchment, apparently designed as models for some of the large frescoes in the great church. All these things lay scattered about the floor of the chapel in the wildest confusion. Ras Bariaü's so-called brother now came to beg us to visit the Nebrid, who was waiting to receive us, so we mounted our mules and proceeded to his audience chamber, which was in a large round thatched house very like the Ras's palace at Adowa. The only furniture it contained was a high wooden throne covered with fine scarlet cloth, which had been made on the occasion of the King's late coronation at Axum, and an *alga* placed opposite to it, on which the high priest was seated. The mud walls of the house were, as usual, adorned with the horns of goats, on which were hung the matchlocks of the

Nebrid's attendants. As there were no other seats in the place besides the throne and the alga, after the usual salaams we sat down beside the Nebrid and entered into conversation, Tella acting as interpreter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIGH PRIEST OF AXUM.—RETURN TO ADOWA.

NEBRID YASU was an old man, with grey hair and a very amiable and gentle manner. He said he had expected to see us the day before, as the Ras had told him of our arrival at Adowa, and that we wished to visit him; he also told us that he had prepared a house for us to sleep in, and asked us to break bread with him that day; meanwhile he offered to conduct us to see the great stone of Axum, the most famous remnant of the old temple which once stood there. We therefore mounted our mules and followed the old priest, who led the way on a handsomely caparisoned *buggali*,* and of course carried a large umbrella in his hand, for an African of rank is often as particular about carrying a sun-shade as the most fastidious of fair-skinned beauties, and it is not uncommon to meet a stalwart warrior, armed with sword and spear, striding along in the open country with a little wicker-work parasol balanced daintily over his head. Five men, carrying on their shoulders great two-edged swords with solid silver handles, marched before the Nebrid, while at our heels followed the whole population of the

* Tigre for mule.

town, watching intently all our movements. Whenever we paused a moment they all squatted down in a circle and stared at us, and when we moved on they rose and followed like our shadows. You cannot go *near* a village in Abyssinia without undergoing this painful scrutiny. It is horrible not to be able to walk five paces without seeing twenty or thirty pair of eyes silently regarding you with a fixed stare, not to be able to pause for a moment to look at a tree or a flower without seeing twenty or thirty dusky figures immediately squat down in a circle round you, twenty or thirty brown heads gravely nod to one another, and twenty or thirty faces, devoid of all expression, silently gaze at you open-mouthed, as if they wanted to be fed. Try to drive them away—the circle merely increases its circumference; appear perfectly indifferent, and the circle closes so much that you become painfully conscious of the melted butter which every Abyssinian delights to carry on his head; sit down to write and try to weary out your audience—vain hope, they will squat gazing at you for hours together, as if it did them good: and perhaps it does. Frankenstein's monster stuck to him not more closely than those eyes follow your every movement, and you might as well seek to run away from your shadow as to escape them. True, if you are seized with a violent fit of coughing or sneezing, Abyssinian politeness will induce one of your spectators to rise up and screen you behind his *kuarie*, of which he kindly divests himself for the purpose; but I confess that on the whole I prefer sneezing in public to having

my head enveloped in a native blanket. To be surrounded by your servants is no better than being encircled by the crowd, for you still have no privacy; but there is *one* and one only way to avoid perpetual scrutiny, and that is to have a monkey. Before my brother left Abyssinia he got a beautiful one; it was of a grave and dignified demeanour, though occasionally given to making faces and performing gambols of a rather sportive nature—but even the most serious characters have their lighter moments. Whenever my brother pitched his tent near a village, he tied his monkey to a tree outside, and it at once became immensely popular with the natives, who would sit watching it for hours. My brother was entirely abandoned, and the monkey held a levee in his stead; in fact, his monkey soon became quite an important personage, and no students of Darwin could have evinced a greater respect for it than did the natives—perhaps they were one step nearer to it in relationship. On one occasion the people of an Abyssinian village began ill-treating my brother's servants; my brother took his gun and sallied out of his tent, *followed by his monkey.* When the natives saw the monkey they threw down their arms, and placing heavy stones on their necks—in sign of subjection—begged forgiveness. It was bad enough for my brother to came out of his tent himself, but to bring his monkey also was *too* awful. It was like the President of the French Assembly putting on his hat, or the Baron of Shurlands calling for his boots; there was a fearful solemnity about it, which quite cowed them, and they felt that their only

chance was in immediate submission. *Mais revenons à nos moutons,* as the author of the Rape of the Lock tells us—

> "'Twas now the season when the glorious sun
> His heav'nly progress through the twins had run,"

and therefore very hot in Abyssinia. Feeling faint and giddy from the long time we had been in the saddle, I drew from my holster a flask containing a small and much-cherished store of cherry brandy, and having extracted the cork began drinking from it. No sooner did the crowd see this wonderful performance than their excitement became intense, and they all rushed round me, holding up the hollows of their hands and sticking out their tongues to indicate that they, too, wanted to taste the contents of my flask. However, as it contained the whole of my stock of spirit for the rest of the journey, I was obliged to explain that cherry brandy was a medicine only good for white men, and that it would not do for me to give it to people who were brown. Poor fellows! they all tried hard to look white immediately, but unfortunately they could not succeed.

We had now reached an open space at the side of the town, enclosed on two sides by the amphitheatre of granite hills I have before mentioned. In the centre stood an enormous *Ficus religiosa,* which, even in Abyssinia, where these trees grow to a wonderful size, was famous for the extent of shade cast by its branches. It was said that five hundred men might sit under it on the hottest day without one of them being exposed to the sun. Opposite this tree, at the foot of the

granite hills, stood a great reservoir of water, measuring one hundred and fifty feet square, and bedded into the ground on all sides of us lay huge monoliths of granite which had once formed part of the old temple—

> "Remnants of things that have passed away,
> Fragments of stone reared by creatures of clay."

Most of these stones were of the same form as "the grey sentinel" which we saw standing by the road side on approaching Axum. Some of them had patterns carved on the front, but none bore any traces of inscriptions; most had been overthrown, and a few even broken, by the Turks, during some former invasion; but I believe they had originally all stood upright, like the isolated stones in a Druid temple, though, unlike Druidical remains, they were hewn with the greatest precision, and, as I have said, sometimes decorated with a carved pattern. Bruce, I think, calls them obelisks, and says there were forty of them to be seen in his time (1771); but it would be difficult to count their number now, as many are hidden or enclosed by the houses that have been built round them. According to Johnson's definitions—"Obelisk, a pyramid of marble or stone,"—"Pyramid, an angular and pointed pillar," the stones at Axum are certainly obelisks, but they differ from most of the obelisks of Egypt in this, that *all* their sides are not equal, and instead of ending in a pyramidal point, they are cut at the top into an ornament shaped like an ace of spades.

After knocking and shouting for half an hour at the door of a house, we at last induced the suspicious inmates—who evidently imagined that the Nebrid was going to make a requisition on them—to let us in, that we might measure the base of one of the large stones, against which the house had been built; this stone, like all the others, was a single block of granite of a tapering form; at the base it measured ten feet two inches by six feet nine, the opposite sides of course being equal, and, judging from these proportions, I should say it can have been little less than fifty feet in height, though, as the other end was buried in the ground, we could not get its exact length by measurement.

Perhaps the most curious of all the remains of the old temple is what is called the great stone of Axum, which still remains upright in its original position, untouched by war, weather, or time. It stands by the side of the old *Daroo* tree, the same as it stood two thousand years before that mighty tree pushed its first leaves above the ground. Beside it was seated an aged Abyssinian priest, with a young child playing at his knee; the child might have seen some seven summers; the old man had known ten times that number, but his life was as the butterfly's existence of a day compared with the age of the great stone by which he sat. Once, forty goodly brethren stood around that stone, bearing proud testimony to the great works done by the generations of former times before the world grew old, but since then dynasties have been founded and died out,

and as century upon century has rolled by, one after another of the brothers has bowed his lofty head in the dust, never to rise again, till, at last, only the tallest and fairest of all that goodly band remains unshaken by the hand of time; true, some of his companions have not yet fallen, but their heads are no longer proudly erect as of yore; and, perhaps, before the names of those who breathe to-day have quite passed from the memory of man, the last of the grey brothers may have sunk to the earth.

The great stone of Axum is said to be seventy feet high, which is five feet higher than Cleopatra's needle; we had however no means of measuring it. Like all the other stones, its width is nearly twice as great as its depth; it has four parallel sides forming four right angles, it tapers gradually towards the top, and finally ends in a pointed ornament, somewhat resembling an ace of spades. The front, or smoothed side, is carved with a regular pattern, dividing it into little pannels, and near the base is the carved representation of a locked door of ordinary dimensions. The lock carved on this door is exactly the same as the wooden locks still used in Egypt and Palestine, but which are never seen in Abyssinia. The Abyssinians believe that this mysterious door can be opened by enchantment, and that it leads to untold treasures concealed in subterranean caverns beneath the big stone, a belief which is enhanced by the stone being of sufficient thickness to conceal a secret passage; but whatever the mystical meaning of the door may have been, there is no doubt that it is

part of the solid stone. In front of this door is a great square block of granite placed against the base of the stone, and having four little hollows scooped in the upper side about the size and depth of a finger bowl. The surface of this block is quite smooth, and has a scroll pattern carved round the edge, but the under part is rough and irregular in shape. Probably it was used as an altar, and the blood of the sacrifices was collected in the little basins I have described.

We were told that when King Yohannes goes to Axum he often practises casting his spear over the big stone. To cast an ordinary lance right over the top of it is considered a great feat, but the present King is exceedingly skilful in all feats of strength and manly exercises.

Leaving the ruins of the old stone-worshippers' temple, we went to the private house of the Nebrid, and were invited to seat ourselves beside him in a raised alcove at the end of a long room, down the centre of which a sort of rude table had been placed, covered with pieces of *tef* (native bread) for the dinner of his attendant priests. Standing in and about the house were several guards armed with shields and spears, for the Nebrid is the governor as well as the chief priest of Axum, and has some hundreds of warriors under his command. As soon as we were seated, a white cotton curtain was let fall in front of the alcove to hide us from all indiscreet eyes, and the Nebrid's body servant having filled three small glasses with white spirit, presented one to each of us and one to his

master, after emptying which, he addressed us somewhat in the following fashion, Tedla, of course, acting as our interpreter:—

Nebrid.—My heart is joyful to see the friends of my lord the Ras Bariaü. How did you leave the Queen and the people of your country?

Interpreter.—My masters say that Her Majesty was well; they thank you in the name of their countrymen.

Nebrid.—The English are a great and powerful people; it is like the light of the sun to the eyes of an old man to see them. Your servant thanks God that he has done so.

Interpreter.—In the country of Narbonne the honey is sweet, but the words of my lord the Nebrid are sweeter to my master's ears than the honey of France to their lips.

Nebrid.—What has made the Englishmen travel so far from their home? Do they know the way to the hidden treasures of the mountains?

Interpreter.—My masters do not seek the gold in the mountains; they come to hunt the elephant and the lion on the great rivers; the bullets of their rifles will split the thick skull of the buffalo as the lightning rends the trees of the forest.

Nebrid (evidently not satisfied that we have not some secret object in our journey).—The English are strong as the lion, and their hearts know no fear; but my guests are wise too, their beards are long, they have much knowledge.

Interpreter.—The knowledge and the beard of the Englishman grow while he is yet in the strength of his youth, as the tree bears most fruit before it grows old; my master—pointing to me—has seen but twenty-two winters.

Nebrid (incredulous).—With us a man's beard grows not till he is advanced in years, and with it only comes his wisdom; but the white man is different from his brother in Africa.

We quite agreed with this last statement, and changed the conversation. The Nebrid showed much curiosity to know the use of our spurs, note-books, pencils, &c., and asked us to show him all that we had in our pockets; he was much puzzled at the sight of a small travelling comb, but when we told him the use of it, he at once set to work to comb out our hair and beards, an employment which appeared to afford him the greatest satisfaction. The Abyssinians generally wear their own hair in plats, and use a single pin of bone or wood for parting it. When my brother, to illustrate the use of a pocket pencil, drew a portrait of one of the Nebrid's followers, he begged earnestly that he might keep it, though he seemed rather afraid to have his own portrait taken.

All through the audience a couple of white sheep stood with their heads poked through a little square window behind the Nebrid, watching our movements, and occasionally nibbling at the amiable old priest's grey hair, an interruption he bore with great good nature, for they were his pets, his "ewe lambs." Though

the cotton curtain remained down before the alcove where we were sitting, we could distinguish that a great number of people had come into the room and were squatting on the ground eating with great vigour and much noise. Dinner was also brought to us, and was merely a repetition of the fare we had with Ras Bariaü, for there was no meat, as we were still in Lent. Instead of *tedge* the Nebrid gave us beer, or *tella*, which, though it was rather clearer than one usually gets it in the Abyssinian villages, was still to our taste a horribly nasty beverage, much inferior even to muddy water.

When the Nebrid was in his house it was his habit to have his five silver-handled swords hung up on the wall beside him. Two or three of his more favoured friends were allowed to put their heads behind the cotton curtains, and have bits of *tef* stuffed into their mouths by the Nebrid's own hands, but the greater number of his guests ate in the other part of the room, being for the most part inferior priests whom he supported, for in Abyssinia, as was formerly the case in Saxon England, the dependents all feed with their master. When all the priests had eaten their fill they prostrated themselves before the Nebrid and went away. Shortly afterwards we also took our leave and retired to the house which had been prepared for us. It was of course merely a round mud edifice, with two *algas* in it for us to sleep on. A sheep had been sent in case we desired meat, and was soon dispatched and thrown on some red-hot embers to grill, but I felt faint and ill after the long day in the sun, and was glad to

lie down with my saddle for a pillow. "Blessed be the man who invented sleep," says Sancho Panza, and the more she flies from the weary eyelids the greater do her blessings seem. She is the comforter of the afflicted, the alleviator of the suffering, the strengthener of the weary; ay! and I have had cause to know it, the larder of the hungry and the thirsty. It is only the glutton groaning under a well-deserved nightmare, or the criminal whose crimes have at last awakened a tardy conscience, for whom sleep has terrors; to the unfortunate she is ever the kindest and gentlest of companions if they can but woo her to their pillow. But to hope for sleep in the house we now occupied was as useless as to

"Whistle to the cockatoos, and mock the hairy-faced baboon,"

for, like most Abyssinian buildings, it literally swarmed with animal life. It must not be supposed that we were fastidious; on the contrary we were getting quite used to slight drawbacks, and could we have counted our enemies by fives or tens, or even dozens, it would have been a trifle, but when it came to *tens of hundreds*, life become a prolonged agony, and we resolved never again to pass another night in a native house; but the way to hell is paved with good intentions, and it was quite impossible to keep to this determination when we had not our tent with us, as even in Ethiopia there are social rules to be observed, and servants would lose half their respect for a master who lay out on the ground, instead of reposing on the couch of a chief, however unpleasant such a couch may be.

My brother had decided to remain another day at Axum, but as next day was the market day at Adowa, and I wished to buy a mule, I resolved to return there this same night. At 2 A.M., therefore, having awakened one of the servants and saddled my mule, I left Axum, encountering only a few wild dogs, who were prowling about the ruins in a ghost-like manner. The night was very dark, and the sky, instead of being blue, had a dark red appearance, a phenomenon I have noticed more than once in the tropics. As the day had been very hot, so the night was now very cold, and as my servant could only speak Abyssinian, we proceeded silently in a cheerless manner enough, stumbling in the darkness over the many stones with which the road was strewn. At last my servant gave me to understand that we had lost our way; this was evidently true, as we were now on the side of a mountain which we had certainly not crossed in the morning, besides, before we had occasionally passed long lines of dark ghostly figures walking along the road with burdens on their heads, evidently making their way to Adowa for the early market; whereas now there was not a soul in sight. It was so dark, too, that we could not regain the track, for which we searched more than an hour in vain, scrambling about on the slippery side of the mountain. To add to our misfortunes my servant began to shiver, and presently lay down, declaring he felt so ill that he could not go further; we therefore had to wait where we were for the daylight. I have before observed how chill it is before sunrise in Abyssinia, and we were

nearly frozen with cold; however, fortunately, "*ne caldo ne gelo resta mai in cielo,*" and

> "Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
> Comes dancing from the East,

as Milton says, and a few streaks of faint yellow light appear on the horizon. These enable us to cross the shoulder of the mountain, and we find ourselves looking down into the beautiful vale of Adowa. The sun is rising behind the mountains, making the whole sky glorious with red and gold; the lofty granite peaks glow in the morning light, brilliant with every shade of pink and purple, casting long shadows over the plain, where already a few light wreaths of vapour are floating up from the river. There is a conical hill beneath us, tall and steep as an obelisk, with a solitary church on its summit, where a choir of priests are chanting the psalms of David. The note of the emerald cuckoo—

> "Which, as the lark, arises to the sky,
> 'Mid morning's sweetest breeze and softest dew,"

reaches us from the valley below, the ring of the woodman's axe sounds cheerily in the woods, hundreds of bright-coloured birds start from the branches, spreading their wings in the morning sunshine, the great Francolin partridges whirr up from the long grass at our feet, and all the air is full of life, light, and sound.

There was no difficulty in finding our road now, an hour's ride brought us to the river, and in another twenty minutes we were back in the camp, where Mustafa was just slaying a sheep for breakfast, while

Baulo filled my bath with fresh water from the brook. No one who has not been in the tropics knows the full luxury of a cold bath, especially when you have passed a sleepless night. After a short *siesta* and a good breakfast I felt that life was no longer all made up of hardships, and proceeded to Adowa in search of new mule.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAMP LIFE AT ADOWA—*continued.*

I RODE first to the house of Narreti, the Italian carpenter: he was busy making a new stock for a rifle which had been sent by Her Majesty to King Yohannes, when he was Prince Kassa of Tigre.

It appeared that one day when the king was at church, his gunbearer let fall the rifle and broke the stock; of course the poor fellow anticipated the most awful punishment, as there were few things which the king valued so much as his English breech-loader. However, sacred buildings in Abyssinia have the right of sanctuary; the frightened gun-bearer therefore rushed into the body of the church where the king's wrath could not reach him, and, after the lapse of a few days, was pardoned. Narreti was then ordered to make a new stock, for the Abyssinians have a firm conviction that a European can do anything he wishes, even to the coining of money by enchantment.

The right of sanctuary afforded by some of the churches protects even murderers from vengeance, but they must not stir beyond the wall of the church, and in some cases there is a limit to the time which they may remain in it, just as there was in the sanctuaries

of Western Christendom during the Middle Ages. I believe that some towns in Abyssinia afford sanctuary to everybody living in them. Axum, I think, is one, and though the sanctuary has occasionally been broken, such an act is considered to entail an awful curse. But there are instances recorded where the priests themselves have been induced to give up those who sought sanctuary, through fear, or for the sake of a heavy bribe. An instance of the protection afforded by Abyssinian sanctuaries occurred to a French gentleman some time after my visit to Abyssinia. He was travelling not far from the frontier with some native servants and an Italian who had joined himself to his retinue. They were passing through an Abyssinian village when a dispute arose between the servants and the natives, who being, as usual, all armed, began to make threatening gestures with their spears, gestures which, though no doubt alarming enough in appearance, would probably have led to nothing if regarded with firm indifference. The Frenchman, who was an experienced traveller, knew this, but, unfortunately the Italian, who was entirely wanting in that coolness which is absolutely necessary to the explorer, immediately raised his gun and shot the man in front of him dead. This rash act instantly led to a cry for blood-vengeance and a furious attack on the part of the natives; of course there was not a moment to lose, and retreat was the only thing practicable, but the question was where to retreat to? Luckily the French gentleman's servants knew of a church which afforded the right of

sanctuary, and thither they retired, the Frenchman in self-defence keeping his assailants at bay with his fowling-piece, for his Italian companion had become quite demoralised by the sight of the storm he had raised. At last they reached the church, but not before one of their attendants had been wounded by a spear, and some twenty of the Abyssinians had fallen beneath the Frenchman's discharges of buck-shot. Of course the little party at once barricaded themselves in the church, which however was respected by the natives, who, though much infuriated, contented themselves with surrounding the building, ready to take their blood-vengeance the moment the travellers should attempt to leave it. Thus matters continued for several days, and the prisoners' hope of escape seemed fearfully problematical; however, fortunately during this time the wounded men still lingered on, and only the man who had been first shot was dead; the natives, too, with a justice which speaks well for their character, allowed those of my French friend's attendants who had not taken part in the fight to pass in and out of the church, and they were therefore able to supply their master with food; by their means also negotiations were entered into with the chief of the village, and it was at last agreed that the claims for vengeance should be considered as appeased, and the party allowed to leave the church unmolested, if they would pay 100 dollars blood-money for the man who was dead, and give up all their cattle. Naturally these terms were gladly accepted, and the refugees left their sanctuary. I believe

not long afterwards several of the wounded natives died, but the travellers were by that time fortunately across the frontier and out of danger.

I saw at Narreti's a black panther-skin, which is used for making the *lemd*, a sort of cape or tippet, which Abyssinian chiefs and warriors of high rank wear round their necks. This tippet is not like those worn by ladies in Europe, but consists of strips of fur about six inches wide, which hang straight down from the neck, and are sometimes ornamented with silver filigree work. The *lemd* is sometimes made of other skins than that of the black panther for people of inferior rank, but the black panther-skin is the fur which is most highly esteemed of any in Abyssinia, as it is very rare, and often fetches from thirty to forty dollars even in its rough state.

The black panther, the fur of which is really of a very dark-brown colour marked with jet black spots, is found mostly in the Galla country, S. W. of Debra Tabor, and is both large and fierce. Wonderful stories are told of how the Galla hunters capture it, for they dare not meet it face to face with their spears, and therefore resort to strategy. It is said that, when the Galla hunter has discovered the haunt of a black panther, he digs a round hole in the ground some six feet deep, and just large enough for him to stand upright in. He then gets into this hole, and placing his round buffalo hide shield on the top of it, so as to cover him entirely, calls to the panther in a mocking voice, daring it to come out of the jungle where it is concealed.

The panther, who is naturally a very passionate beast, on hearing this defiance, immediately rushes out and tries to get at the hunter by clawing at his shield which covers the top of the hole where he is ensconced, but the Galla holds tight, and then ensues a dialogue, or rather a monologue, for though the panther is supposed to understand Galla, he only answers by growls. The hunter first abuses the panther and then ridicules it, calling it all sorts of names, until the unfortunate panther gradually works itself up into such a frenzy that it at last fairly *dies of rage*, and the hunter emerging from his hole secures its skin. In confirmation of this story the Abyssinians declare, that when the black panther skins are brought to market they never have any marks of lance-thrusts or sword-cuts upon them, as have the skins of other animals which are killed in the chase. I fancy the *truth* is, that the panthers are snared by a device which they often use in Abyssinia for catching the spotted leopard. A running noose is firmly tied to the branch of a tree, and the branch is then bent down and attached to a stake in the ground in such a way that anything moving the noose will set it free; a kid, or piece of meat, is then placed behind the noose, which is carefully concealed among the leaves, and placed in such a way that the leopard in springing at his prey will pass through the noose; of course, he becomes intangled in it; the movement sets free the branch, which flies up, and the leopard, instead of eating the poor little kid (whose feelings must be anything but pleasant) suddenly finds

himself suspended in the air, where his struggles soon cause the running noose to tighten round him, and he is easily killed by the hunters.

Besides panthers and leopards, there is in Abyssinia a sort of wild cat, called, I believe, the *nebry guolgual*, which is spotted like a leopard, though it is considerably smaller. I was told these beasts are often to be seen at night walking on the roofs of the houses at Gondar. There is also in Ethiopia a large grey tiger cat, which I have seen more than once, but never been able to kill, as the largest swan shot, even when fired into it at a few yards' distance, was apparently insufficient to dispose of its nine lives. These tiger cats can be very unpleasant antagonists when driven to bay, as they are possessed of much of the ferocity and some of the strength of the leopard, which is a very dangerous animal when bent on mischief. An old writer says, "Tigers and panthers are much more cruel and fierce than lions, for they never spare mankind; yet they covet the Ethiopians before white men, as more accustomed to that sort of diet." I have heard the same remark made of alligators and crocodiles, and on one occasion I tested their indifference to white flesh in my own person. May it be long before they learn to prefer the white man to the black!

I have often heard of a panther, or spotted leopard, killing a man with a single stroke of its claws, and, though many of them are speared by the natives, they often do a great deal of mischief, carrying off mules, oxen, sheep, &c., and sometimes even entering houses in

pursuit of their prey. I was once told that a man had been killed by a leopard in the woods. According to Abyssinian custom it fell to the lot of his nearest male relative to avenge his death; his brother therefore armed himself with shield and spear and went in quest of the leopard, which he found not far from the dead body in a tangled part of the forest, where only one man could go at a time. The ferocious animal, having once tasted human blood, no sooner saw its antagonist than it sprang at him, and killed him with a single stroke of its powerful claws, which are said to have gone right through the poor hunter's skull: so it fell to the lot of another relation to go and try to kill the leopard, but he also shared the fate of the [illegible] before him, and never returned. Two men who were considered great hunters now attempted to spear the man-slayer, but they both paid for their temerity with their lives, and the leopard, which had now killed no less than five men, became quite a terror to the neighbourhood, and the natives began to look in vain for a relation of the fallen men brave enough to face it. At last a very small man rose up, declaring that *he* would slay the leopard, and taking a couple of spears started alone on the expedition, from which nobody ever expected to see him come back. However, he crept cautiously through the forest till he came in sight of the leopard's retreat, and then, climbing up behind a great rock, flung a spear from his hiding-place with such skill that the leopard was pinned to the ground as it sat licking its paws after its last meal, and the hunter,

having dispatched it, carried home the skin in triumph.

While I was at Narreti's two mules were brought for me to look at: one, a large black animal of the Spanish breed, which had been brought to Adowa by some chief who had been down to the coast to meet the English expedition on its way to Magdala; the other, a little mouse-coloured mule, a native of the country, as thin and wiry as a greyhound, and looking quite diminutive beside its big Spanish brother; but I was told that the Spanish mule, though apparently so much the stronger of the two, would be utterly useless among the terrible passes of the Semyen mountains, the barren and pathless crags of which are almost devoid of herbage, and are only crossed with great difficulty, even by the hardy mules born in the country. I therefore dismissed the big mule and bought the tiny mouse-coloured one, which proved a most sure-footed and indefatigable little animal, with a wonderful facility for living on next to nothing when she was on the march. Arab horses in the same way are capable of performing the most extraordinary feats of endurance on their native deserts, though to *our* eyes they seem somewhat wanting in muscle and bottom. I remember going with an English friend—a good judge of horse-flesh—to see the stud of Ali Pacha Sheriff, who boasts of having 300 pure-bred mares in his stables, and our not seeing one beast which could compare with a fine English thoroughbred for perfection of make, strength, and symmetry, any more than an Arab runner, who can travel 200

miles in three days without tasting food, can compare physically with one of our athletes who would probably be broken down for life if he attempted such a feat. I do not mean to say that there are not many Arab horses of wonderful beauty, but it is generally of a delicate and fragile kind, and it is only when they are galloping unshod over their native plains that they discover that unrivalled spirit and endurance which makes them so loved by all true horsemen who have ever mounted a real steed of the Hidjaz.

My new purchase cost thirty-two dollars, and before the bargain was completed each of these coins had to be minutely examined by its new owner, for no Abyssinian will accept a dollar which is not of the year 1780, and his only test whether a coin be good or bad is counting the number of dots on the tiara and shoulder-knot of the portrait of Maria Teresa. If I remember right there should be nine dots on each, so the vendor of my mule had five hundred and seventy-six dots to count, which made the purchase rather a long affair. Had I offered him five-guinea gold pieces he would probably have refused them with disdain, for in Ethiopia a sovereign is worth little more than a brass button, and even a *clean* silver dollar is put aside as bad; but the Abyssinians never think of biting or ringing money as the Chinese do, and I am pretty certain that if my dollars had been lead instead of silver, they would have been regarded with equal satisfaction by the Abyssinian peasants, so long as they were sufficiently dirty and had the right number of dots.

There must be a perfectly enormous number of Maria Teresa dollars of the year 1780 in the whole empire of Ethiopia, and it is rather curious how they can have got into the country, as Maria Teresa died in 1780, and the number of dollars struck must have been limited. I believe England got the old dies from Austria and had some struck for the Magdala campaign, but this would hardly account for their having become the exclusive currency in parts of Ethiopia where the English have never been, and where the face of a white man excites as much curiosity among the natives as did the advent of the Shah in London.

As a dollar is a large sum in Africa, the Abyssinians are naturally obliged to have a currency of less value into which they can change their dollars. This currency is salt, which is cut into oblong blocks, shaped somewhat like a whetstone, and weighing one pound each. In some parts of Abyssinia twelve of these blocks equal the value of a dollar, in others fourteen, in others as many as twenty, and so on according to the distance of the country from the salt plains near the coast. It will be understood that it is no sinecure to be obliged to have much small change in Abyssinia, and the value of a couple of dollars is almost a load for a man. Much of the salt comes from the great salt basin of Asali, a dismal plain on the southern frontier of Tigre, nearly 200 ft. *below* the level of the sea, and enveloped in an almost perpetual fog; besides which, it is subject all the summer to a northerly wind which fills the air with a cloud of salt-dust, so thick that it hides from view every-

thing more than 100 yards off. In this wretched spot dwell a people whose only villages are clusters of palm trees, and their principal nourishment the palm wine; these are the salt-workers, each of whom has a palm to himself, under the shade of which he lives, and no other habitation does he care for. Even when he goes into other countries where people dwell in houses, and have sheep and vegetables, and fields to till, the remembrance of the sweet palm wine makes him long for his native salt plains beneath the smoking cone of the volcano of Artali, and he is wretched till he has returned to them,* for curiously enough the love of home is perhaps stronger in the breast of the houseless Afar than it is in the civilised European whose home contains every luxury.

On Sunday C. returned from Axum, having passed the previous night at a village between Axum and Adowa, as a second night in the house at Axum would have been intolerable. He brought with him the brushes of two jackals, which he had captured after an exciting chase.

Our camp on the hill was dreadfully dusty, and we were often exposed to whirlwinds, which swept up everything before them, and sometimes threatened to carry us bodily off, tent and all. I have seen the conical straw roofs of the native houses carried up into the air like parachutes, and deposited on the ground in quite another place, and huts that were merely made

* See M. Munzinger's narrative of a journey through the Afar country, read before the Royal Geographical Society, 26th April, 1869.

of branches would disappear altogether. Ludolphus speaks of "The whirlwind called *sendo*, which in the Amharic dialect signifies snake,—a wind so furious, that it throws down all before it, houses, oaks, and stones, and hurries them along in the air." Fortunately we escaped this fate, though when one of these blasts surprised us, we often had to rush out and hold on to the ropes of the tent to prevent its being carried away.

Notwithstanding that we were retired from Adowa, we were neither abandoned to silence nor solitude. At daylight each morning groups of natives would collect before the Ras's house, crying in a loud voice, *Abiet! Abiet!*—my master! my master!—these were supplicants for justice, begging him to deliver judgment on their various cases.

In Abyssinia if two men have a dispute, they can call on any other man to be judge between them; should they not, however, be satisfied with his decision, they go to the chief of the country, and shout *Abiet!* before his house, till he calls them before him and decides on their case. When the chief sits in judgment he always has beside him a man with a *giraff* ready to administer instant punishment on the convicted party. The *giraff* is a whip with a short wooden handle and a thong of hippopotamus hide, twelve feet long, and of such weight that when well applied it will cut a piece of flesh out at every blow. These whips are used for driving oxen, and for punishing offenders; but owing to the length of the thong and the shortness of the handle, they are difficult to manage. I was told that the late King

Theodorus was very expert at this exercise, and was so fond of displaying his skill with the *giraff*, that often, when he passed a man ploughing in the fields, he would dismount, and seizing the *giraff* and the handle of the plough, proceed to drive the oxen himself.

I have said that the Ras of a country can pass judgment on the cases brought before him, but should the Ras's justice fail to satisfy the contending parties, they can go and get another and last judgment delivered upon them by the King, whose word is final. Obstinate people, however, by seeking three judgments, have sometimes only succeeded in getting punished three times over. Witnesses have to be produced at all trials, and a great deal of oratory is displayed by the plaintiffs and defendants, who in turn address the chief before whom they are pleading, using every modulation of the voice and trick of rhetoric and gesticulation to enhance the effect of their discourse, as if they had been regularly brought up for the bar. If a man in the country is robbed or beaten by another, he cries out *Abiet! Abiet!* in the hopes of attracting the attention of some witness, whom he can produce when he asks for justice at the chief's hands. Herodotus tells us that in Persia the people used to come in great crowds of both sexes crying to the gates of the palace, and the custom of princes sitting to give judgment on the cases of all who came before them is as ancient as history itself. Besides the people calling for justice, the barking of dogs, and the screams of the mules picketed behind the tents, who were always biting and kicking

as their evil natures prompted them, there were generally two or three half-naked horsemen galloping about to tempt us to purchase their steeds, and with the first rays of daylight came the dismal clanking of the chains of the poor prisoners, begging for bread. In Abyssinia, when a man is convicted of an offence for which he has to pay a fine, he must find a friend who will offer himself as security that the culprit will not run away till the fine be paid. The prisoner and the man who has the misfortune to be his friend are then chained leg to leg and turned loose to roam about, more faithful in their friendship than Pylades and Orestes, sharing one another's misfortunes and begging together the money necessary to pay the fine. They generally support themselves by wandering from house to house, getting what they can from the compassion of other people, until either they are able to regain their liberty, or the death of one puts an end to their double existence.

Last, not least, of the morning noises of Adowa were the tremendous explosions which used to proceed from a rocky gully behind our camp, where the natives tried their *gingals*. These *gingals* are huge blunderbusses made of iron, which they use for killing elephants; they are generally charged with a good handful of powder and a miscellaneous collection of stones and iron; it, as a rule, takes two strong men to fire one off, and the greater the recoil and the greater the noise made by one of these uncouth weapons, the more it is esteemed by the natives, who generally go on increasing the

charge until they finally burst it, and do more damage to themselves than to the elephants. Their favourite way of shooting the elephant is to steal up with one of these *gingals* till they get within a few yards of it, for the elephant is not a very observant animal, and takes little notice of the hunters if they are careful that it does not get wind of them. When the natives think that they have got near enough to their quarry not to miss, they fire the *gingal* point blank into its side, a tremendous report follows, and the unfortunate elephant collapses on one side, while his pursuers are knocked over by the recoil on the other; but if the *gingal* don't happen to have burst and maimed them, they presently pick themselves up and proceed to cut up their game, hacking out the tusks, securing the tail as a trophy to show to their chief and boast of, and preserving the ears, which in the East African species are very large, to make shields. The Arabs of the plains of Upper Nubia kill the elephant in a different and more chivalrous manner, fearlessly encountering it with no other weapon than their great two-edged straight cross-handled swords, of which I shall speak later.

As we added to the number of our servants, a little village of huts soon sprang up mushroom-like near our tents, and we would sometimes see in the morning a new house which had made its appearance in a single night without any visible agency. The fact is, the King's departure with his army for Amhara had naturally left many unoccupied houses about Adowa, as usual built of branches interlaced, and whenever our

servants wanted more accommodation they used simply to get inside one of these huts and transport it bodily to the camp. We discovered this one evening by noticing the extraordinary phenomenon of a house which, gently detaching itself from its original position, came slowly walking up the hill towards us, apparently of its own accord, for the servants being inside it were all out of sight.

I need hardly say we constantly visited the Ras to inquire after our missing baggage; but the wily chief always had some fresh excuse for its not being forthcoming. One day we found him sitting with his feet comfortably cushioned on the lap of one of his attendants, while another carefully brushed away the flies from his face with a horsehair switch. He was in a very self-satisfied mood, and boasted to us how he had slain the lion whose mane was attached to his shield, and how the rhinoceros, of whose horn the handle of his sword was made, had also fallen before him. We told him the English did not boast, but we enlightened him as to a few of the wonders of foreign countries, and quite took away his breath by an account of the land of the midnight sun, where one half the year is wrapped in darkness, and the fishes are sixty feet long. When C. showed him a sketch of an Egyptian lady, smiling through her veil, the old warrior, who is a bachelor, kissed it with rapture, and begged to be allowed to accompany us back to her country. My brother afterwards gave him a drawing of the new church at Adowa; he admired it greatly, and said he would give it to the

King; but suddenly a cloud passed over his face, and he began counting the doors, and appeared much astonished to find they were not *all* represented, nor could we ever get him to understand that it was not possible to represent all the sides of a building at once. I could give other instances of the strange existence of shrewdness and simplicity in the minds of the natives, but I fear my readers are almost as tired of tarrying at Adowa as we were, and I will therefore proceed to relate how we left it. I must first, however, pause a moment to give a brief description of the general features of the country through which we were travelling, for the benefit of those who may not happen to be acquainted with its more important characteristics.

CHAPTER XIV.

HABASH.

If we look at the map of Africa, we see that the plains of the Egyptian Soudan are bounded on the S. E. by a long chain of highlands stretching S.W. from Massowah to the Abai, or upper Blue Nile. Let us glance up the course of this river, and its tributary the Jamma, E.S.E., as far as Ankober, the capital of Shoa, whence another great range of hills overlooking the vast plains of Danakil and Adal, extends back N. to Massowah, and we shall have seen the three natural frontier lines of Abyssinia. These three great mountain chains, which, roughly speaking, may be said to form a triangle, with its base resting on the Abai and the Jamma, and its apex at Massowah, are the boundaries of an immense elevated plateau, up-heaved by volcanic action from the sultry plains of tropical Africa, but blessed with a climate as fresh and healthy as any in Europe. Indeed, the table-lands of Abyssinia, bounded on the N.W. by the arid deserts of the Soudan, on the S.S.W. by the country of the ferocious Gallas, and on the east by Danakil, Adal, and the great salt plains of Arrhoo, may be likened to some rocky island, rising in the midst of the ocean, rich

with verdant plains, bubbling streams, and shady woods, but seldom visited by the mariner, owing to its isolated position, and the terrible cliffs by which it is surrounded.

Very rarely do the natives of the Abyssinian plateaux venture down into the fever-stricken plains below, where dwell their hereditary enemies the Mahometans, and fierce races of pagan Gallas, who file their teeth—as the Abyssinians believe—the better to devour their victims. Nor, except when led to a pious and profitable invasion of Habash by some fiery Mahometan chief, do the people of the low countries often penetrate into the wild passes of the Ethiopian mountains, which their traditions have taught them to regard as the abode of powerful and malignant spirits, who exert their baneful influence over all who encroach on their dominions. It therefore happens, that from whichever side the traveller approaches Abyssinia he can glean but little information from the natives concerning the country beyond the mighty wall of mountains that rise before him, as if to bar his path. Of course the mountains he sees from below are but the *lesser* spurs of the ranges behind, and as he mounts higher and higher from the plains, he is astonished to find that—as though it were really enchanted—the frowning barrier up which he is climbing seems just as high, if not higher, than when he first started. At each step the view *behind* him grows more extensive, the clouds float far beneath him, and the air becomes light and bracing. But still, each time that he fancies

that he is nearing the top, he discovers to his dismay a new range of hills before him, apparently sprung up in the place of those he has just surmounted, as if in mockery of his efforts; nor is it till he has gained an elevation of many thousands of feet, that he begins to get a view towards the interior of Ethiopia. Then, a new field opens before him. The character of the country, the aspect of the people, their language, their food, their weapons, all are different from what he has met with before. He sees level and verdant plains, raised *ten thousand feet* above the sea, extending as far as the eye can reach. These are intersected by deep ravines and gullies, cut by the action of water; but, if it chance to be the dry season, he may have to dig deep in the bed of sand at the bottom of the ravine before he will find any to quench his thirst. Only a month later, he will perhaps behold a mighty river roaring and surging through the gorge, carrying rocks, trees, and earth away in its impetuous course, and forming an impassable barrier to his return. He will see the great tablelands ending abruptly in perpendicular precipices, which gird with a wall of stone fertile valleys a thousand feet below, and he will see them rising one above the other like the giant steps of some mighty altar dedicated to the sun.

He will see high isolated mountains, with summits as flat as billiard tables, where water is *always* found; and there are villages that can only be reached by the aid of ropes, and where perhaps some conquered

Prince has been sent with his family to end his days. Sighing like the luckless Boabdil * over the country he has lost, whose wooded valleys are within view of his lofty prison, but may never be entered by him again, for the surrounding precipices confine him more securely than the walls of the strongest fortress ever built by human hands.

Rising from the already elevated tablelands, the traveller will see lofty ranges of granite mountains, that vie with the Alps in grandeur; and notable amongst these, the great Semyen chain, whose arid peaks, reaching an elevation of little less than 15,000 feet above the level of the sea, will be no mean obstacle in his path, when he tries to cross from Tigre into Amhara, the country beyond the Takazze. And, when he looks at the thousands of torrents that in the wet season pour down from all these mountains, cutting their way through the rich earth of the valleys, and flooding the Atbara and the Abai, he will know the secret of the inundations of the Nile, and the fertility of Egypt.

In her isolated position, cut off from all hope of moisture from the North by the great deserts of the Sahara and Arabia—for the Red Sea is too narrow to afford much rain—Abyssinia has to rely on the equatorial regions for her supply of water. When the sun

* Near Granada is a hill called *El Ultimo Suspiro del Moro*, from the top of which Boabdil, surnamed the unfortunate, is said to have gazed for the last time on the beautiful vega before leaving it for ever; hence its name, "The Last Sigh of the Moor."

comes to the north, her high mountains catch the moisture drawn from the Indian Ocean, which being condensed, empties itself into her valleys, fertilising the country, and filling the great rivers, which, in the course of a single night will often rise thirty or forty feet. Speaking of the Atbara, Sir Samuel Baker says, "In one night there was a mysterious change—wonders of the mighty Nile!—an army of water was hastening to the wasted river; there was no drop of rain, no thunder-cloud on the horizon to give hope, all had been dry and sultry; dust and desolation yesterday; to-day, a magnificent stream, some 500 yards in width, and from fifteen to twenty feet in depth, flowed through the dreary desert!" * During June, July, August, and part of September, Abyssinia is deluged by the tropical rains, which fall with a force, compared to which our heaviest European thunder-storms are but an insignificant drizzle. The rain, however, only begins to come down each day after twelve o'clock, therefore there are generally six hours of fine weather in the morning, though the roads of course remain impassable from the previous day's rain. Nonnosus, one of the envoys sent by the Emperor Justinian to Axum, A.D. 540, remarked this phenomenon, and relates that the rain only fell during part of the day while he was in Ethiopia.

While the rains continue, 120 rivers, and more than 4000 lesser streams, collect nearly the whole drainage

* "Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia," p. 37.

of Abyssinia into three great rivers, the Abai, the Atbara, and the Mareb. The Mareb, which is the least of these three rivers, loses itself in the sands of the Soudan beyond Cassala; but the Abai and the Atbara, fed by thousands of torrents, make their way through the plains of the Soudan to the main trunk of the Nile —which they join respectively N. lat. 15° 30′ and 17° 37′, near Khartum and Damer—and bear to it the wealth of water and rich earth, on the annual supply of which Egypt depends for her existence.

Abyssinia may therefore, in some sense, be termed the mother of Egypt, for though the Nile receives from the great equatorial lakes the never-failing supply of water, which enables it, even in the midst of summer, to traverse more than a thousand miles of thirsty sand, the waters of the White Nile do not rise sufficiently to flood the fields of lower Egypt, nor are they highly charged with mud. It is to Abyssinia, therefore, that Egypt has to look for those waters which yearly flood her fields, and bear her a priceless deposit of earth, forming an ever-increasing delta beneath the waves of the Mediterranean.

But though the rivers of Ethiopia have thus begot the fertile fields of Egypt, and though Abyssinia is even said to have afforded refuge and protection to some of the first disciples of the Prophet, Egypt has, I fear, been a rather undutiful child, and a sort of hereditary feud has existed between the two countries for centuries. What wonder then that the Abyssinians have from time to time formed projects for turning the

waters of their rivers away from the Nile, and thus simply destroying the fertility of Egypt? It is said that Lalibela, one of the ancient kings of Ethiopia, actually *did* attempt to turn the course of the Atbara into the Mareb, but I believe that Nature has fortunately placed it out of the power of man's vindictiveness to work so much harm, and that Egypt need have little fear that she will ever be effaced from the map of Africa by the turning aside of the great rivers of Ethiopia.

Lying between the tenth and fifteenth degrees of North latitude, and varying in elevation from 3000 to 15,000 feet above the level of the sea, Abyssinia is rich in the *fauna* and *flora* both of Europe and equatorial Africa, and offers no uninteresting field to the researches of the sportsman and the botanist. In the low wooded valleys by the rivers, elephants, hippopotami, rhinoceri, lions, leopards, panthers, buffalos,—in short, most of the larger animals indigenous to Central Africa, are to be met with; while there are endless varieties of the gazelle and antelope kind on the higher plains. Of the numbers of monkeys that inhabit the forests I have already made mention. The birds, I believe, may be roughly classed into four zones, according to the different altitudes at which they are found.* They belong mostly to the kinds common to Southern Africa, but there are also many of our Northern varieties among them. Birds of prey are exceedingly numerous, just as beasts of prey,

* See Markham's "History of the Abyssinian Expedition," p. 182.

hyenas, leopards, jackals, &c., are numerous amongst the animals; and tarantulas, centipedes, and scorpions of great size, among the insects. I calculated that I was sometimes attacked by no less than twelve varieties of parasite at the same time, while I was in Abyssinia, and if—as I believe—the other species of insects and beetles are to be found in the same proportion, the country ought to be interesting to the entomologist, though in this respect it is hardly agreeable to the traveller. We saw many kinds of moths, and there were plenty of butterflies, though it seemed to me that there were few varieties of them. Ludolphus avers that the torpedo exists in Lake Tzana, and that the natives make use of its electric qualities to cure the ague,—much as physicians use galvanism with us at home. However this may be, there is certainly no lack of fish in the lakes and rivers. Reptiles, too, appear to thrive well in Abyssinia, and in the deep pools of the Takazze are to be found numbers of crocodiles; while in the low damp valleys, boa-constrictors as large round as a man's thigh, horned vipers, the terrible cobra-capella, the Iguana and other varieties of gigantic lizards, chameleons, toads, and newts, are common. There is a legend of a flying dragon in the Walkit,* and I more than once heard stories of a flying serpent which was to be found there, of so poisonous a nature that if it only looked at a man it killed him. An old author, Tellez or Ludolphus—I

* See "Life in Abyssinia," by Mansfield Parkyns.

forget which—speaking of the beasts of Ethiopia, says that there is a serpent of a dark red or brownish colour which lurks under the bushes and weeds, near which if any person or beast happen to come, he breathes forth a poisonous breath of so noisome a smell, and so pestilent, that in a short time it proves mortal, unless speedy antidotes be applied to those who have inhaled it. Of course such stories must be taken *cum grano salis;* they, however, probably derive their origin from the *real* existence of some peculiarly poisonous kind of snake in the Walkit.

The Portuguese writers of the 17th century firmly believed that unicorns were to be found in Abyssinia. Some of the Jesuit fathers even went so far as to say they had seen them in the woods; these were not rhinoceri, but the real traditional unicorn of small size, with a body like that of a horse, with flowing mane, and a long single horn growing out of the front of the forehead. There is, of course, really no physiological reason why such an animal as the unicorn should not exist; only, until one has been killed, or at least seen by some *reliable* traveller, we are justified in supposing it does not; and in the time when unicorns *were* seen, reliable travellers appear to have been scarce. Old Father Lobo, who certainly wrote a valuable book, besides talking of the unicorns he has seen, tells us that the horns of the Abyssinian oxen are so big, that when converted into pitchers, they will easily contain five gallons each; but this is only a slight exaggeration, for which he atones, by honestly avowing that he does not

believe that crocodiles weep, for he has never perceived them to shed tears.

It appears to me likely that many of the flights of fancy, in which most of the old writers on Ethiopia certainly indulged, may be traced to their desire to corroborate the accounts they had heard of the wonderful animals in the country of Prester John. According to a legend, which dates back to the 12th century,* Prester John, who styled himself King of all Christian Kings—a title not unlike that of the Abyssinian *Negouses*—wrote to the King of France a letter, in which he relates that in his country there are hares as big as sheep, flies larger than vultures, immense herds of oxen with seven horns; red, green, and black lions, &c.; and among other things mentions one, we should certainly *never* have guessed, viz., that in his country lying is punished with death. The same legend informs us, that Prester John was then 507 years old, and was gifted with an everlasting youth; which perhaps accounts for the Portuguese having carried on their search for Prester John some centuries after he had been first heard of.

The *flora* of Abyssinia is very varied, and Dr. Schimper assured me that the study alone of the different plants that are to be found between the base and the summit of *one* such mountain as Soloda, would take many years of a botanist's life. Many trees producing valuable gums, woods, fruits, and spices, are

* See "Chefs-d'œuvre des Conteurs Français," by Charles Louandre.

indigenous to the country. Among the lofty peaks of the Semyen range—where the drifted hail never melts, though exposed to the almost vertical rays of a tropical sun—are found the humble Alpine plants of Europe; while in the lowlands the gigantic vegetation of equatorial Africa thrives in wild luxuriance, and, during the wet season, breeds those horrible fevers which make it, as Bruce says, death to sleep by the banks of the great rivers. If the accounts of the natives be true, Abyssinia produces some of the most wonderful vegetable poisons extant. Besides the poison used by the Witos to envenom their spears, which is so deadly that a hippopotamus if only slightly wounded will die from its effects in a couple of hours, the Abyssinians profess to have a powder, of so powerful and subtle a nature, that a few grains of it thrown on a man's clothes will produce in him madness and death. I have already mentioned the precautions taken by people of rank before drinking tedge; but I am bound to say, that during all the time I was in Abyssinia not one case of poisoning came to my knowledge.

Though olives, oranges, lemons, grapes, apricots, figs, bananas, and several kinds of vegetables grow wild in the country, the natives pay little or no attention to their cultivation; but they are extremely fond of capsicums, from which they make a fiery-red pepper, that forms one of the chief ingredients of all their dishes. There are no less than five kinds of corn cultivated in Ethiopia for food—viz., wheat, Indian-corn, *tef*, millet, and *dagousha;* the Indian-corn is called by

the people of Tigre millet from the sea—a term they apply to foreign importations—and is therefore probably not indigenous to the country. *Tef* and *dagousha* are the corn most ordinarily used for making bread; the seed of both is very small, and there are three qualities of each—red, white, and black; white *tef* bread being the most esteemed, and preferred by the natives even to that which is made of wheat. Cotton, coffee, and tobacco are also cultivated in some parts of Abyssinia; the two former being of excellent quality. Indigo and sugar also grow well in this climate, or at least would do so if some slight attention were given to their cultivation, for the plateaux and valleys of Ethiopia—being exposed to a tropical sun, and watered by never-failing rainfalls at regular seasons—offer wonderful facilities to the agriculturist. There are two kinds of earth good for farming. First, the red earth, which is generally cultivated by the natives, produces three harvests, and would be capable of producing even four. And secondly, the black earth, which underlies the pastures, and, though very rich in organic matter, is scarcely ever cultivated by the Abyssinians, who only use it for grass land.

At present, I believe, the produce of Abyssinia, though more than sufficient for her own consumption, affords little for exportation; but were the country to be only moderately well cultivated, its present produce would be easily quadrupled.

I must not forget to mention the honey of Ethiopia, which is plentiful and good. It is used by the people

both for food and for making their hydromel, or *tedge*. Father Lobo and Mr. Mansfield Parkyns, tell us of a tiny bird—one of the *Nectariniæ* which is said to lead the traveller who will follow it to the spot where the wild bees have hid their honeycombs, and only seeks in return for this service a small portion of the hidden treasure. Besides her honey, Ethiopia is celebrated for her gold, skins, and ivory. The gold is mostly found in the beds of the rivers, in large grains. Pliny tells us that this is the finest quality of gold, but I believe that Abyssinia is indebted to the Galla country for much of the gold which finds its way to Gondar and other markets. The ivory, though of excellent quality, is never very large.

Among the diseases common to most parts of Abyssinia is *tœnia*, or tape-worm, which is said to afflict *all* the natives, and two out of three travellers. Though personally I had no experience of it, I often saw the Abyssinians employing as a cure for this terrible malady the flowers of the *kousso* tree; or, in default of them, they sometimes used the root of a sort of wood sorrel. But these remedies were only partial, and had to be repeated every month.

An enlargement of the glands of the throat, often ending in suffocation and death, is also no uncommon disease, to cure which the natives masticate a certain root, for naturally most of their medicines are herbal. Dysentery, especially after the wet season, has proved very fatal to Europeans in Abyssinia; and in the valleys and low countries the most malignant jungle

fevers are often caught, four out of five of which are fatal. Even the natives consider it death to pass a night by many of the rivers, and all the villages in the neighbourhood of the Takazze are therefore built on the spurs of the nearest mountains, far above the beautiful but poisonous valleys through which the river flows. I found small doses of quinine a good preservative against the climate of the valleys, but on the first symptoms of an attack of fever, the best remedy is an emetic, followed by a dose of Epsom salts; and when the violence of the attack is passed, occasional doses of quinine, continued for some time, to prevent a relapse. Six or seven drops of muriatic acid in a tumbler of water is also not a bad medicine, as it may be given during the access of the fever, while the quinine can only be given afterwards. I need hardly say that many of the fevers caught in Africa are really only a very aggravated form of ague. Drinking stagnant and putrid water, as travellers in Ethiopia are not unfrequently obliged to do, is said to lead to the formation of a worm in the limbs, which sometimes reaches the length of five feet, and has to be gently pulled out by the head, a delicate operation requiring much patience, as if the worm—which is very fine—be broken, a fearful inflammation of the limb follows. Itch, elephantiasis, and scrofulous diseases, causing the loss of the hands and feet, are also not uncommon.

But it is not at the number of these maladies, but rather at the few epidemics that visit the towns and villages, that we ought to wonder, when we reflect on

the life led by most of the natives, and the utter disregard they have for cleanliness, sobriety, and diet. Not only do they live for two-thirds of the year entirely on vegetable food, and then take to gorging themselves with *raw* meat, but they sleep twelve or fourteen in one little hut, with no other means of ventilation than a low door; rub themselves continually with rancid butter or fat; pass months together without thinking of washing; pay little regard to morality; swallow gallons of half-fermented *tedge* and *tella* at a sitting: and, in short, disregard the most common precautions for the preservation of health with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. There is, so far as Nature goes, perhaps, no part of Africa endowed with a more beautiful or a more healthy climate than the plateaux of Abyssinia, and civilisation and cultivation ought to render disease almost unknown on them. It is true the *low* valleys will always be unhealthy, from the mass of rank vegetation that grows by the banks of the principal rivers, but the inhabitants of the great table-lands are never obliged to visit them in the unhealthy season; and it is owing more to their own impatience or rashness, than to any fault of the country, that those travellers who have visited Abyssinia have so often found a grave there.

There are three great Christian districts in Abyssinia—Tigre, Amhara; and Shoa. Tigre is the country N.N.E. of the Takazze; Amhara, the country S.W. of the Takazze, between that river and the Abai; and Shoa, the country situated in the S.E. corner of Abys-

sinia, between the bend of the Abai and the mountain chains which form the boundary between Abyssinia and the plains of Adal and the Galla country. Shoa is also, however, to a certain extent isolated from the rest of Abyssinia by some intervening tribes of Gallas.

In these three great divisions—Tigre, Amhara, and Shoa—I have included several smaller principalities and provinces, whose names are too numerous to be mentioned here. Though the people of Tigre, Amhara, and Shoa are principally Christians, Jews, Mahometans, Fire-worshippers, Pagans, and even races that appear to have no form of worship at all, are to be found scattered about in different parts of the country; and, owing to the inaccessible nature of the mountain regions, it is not uncommon in Abyssinia to find two races or tribes, within a couple of days' march of each other, differing as much in type, religion, language, &c., as if several hundred miles lay between them. And, as is usual throughout Africa, the traveller must change his guide, porters, and escort, and place himself in the hands of a new chief, at each new district he enters. Should there be a quarrel between two chiefs, or even between two villages, the difficulties of transit are of course increased, and no little diplomacy is required to get on at all. However, since our journey to Abyssinia, King Johannes has promised to use his own authority to help and protect all travellers coming into his country, who shall be properly recommended to him by the French Vice-Consul at Massowah; and as his authority is now well established throughout Tigre

and Amhara, travelling in Ethiopia will be much facilitated.

The character of the people of Tigre and Amhara, through which districts I principally travelled, is warlike, but not ill-natured or aggressive. Hospitality is sacred in *name* in Abyssinia, as it is in most parts of the East; but there is a strong undercurrent of suspicion and avarice in the minds of the natives which prevents its being much exercised, though I don't believe they would ever leave a man actually to starve, as sometimes happens with us in Europe. I have already said that the Abyssinians are a handsome race; they are also in no way devoid of intelligence, and are very observant; but they never attempt to improve on what their fathers did before them, and are very lazy and proud, preferring much to swagger about with a sword or spear than to handle a ploughshare.

To have killed a lion is considered a feat equal to having slain several men in battle, and it is an old custom of the country for the warriors to assemble on a certain day before their chief for the *dum-fater*, or boast, when they unblushingly boast of all the great deeds they have done, and the men and beasts they have killed. So eager are the Abyssinians to appear at this ceremony red-handed, that occasionally they have even been known to kill some unfortunate slave in secret, in order that they might be able to boast of having slain a man. The Moors and Arabs cut off the heads of their enemies, and the Riffs are so considerate as to wear a long lock of hair just above the ear, for the

especial purpose of enabling their enemies to carry their heads conveniently, should they cut them off, without defiling them by putting their hands in their mouths; but the ferocious Gallas, and some of the Abyssinian tribes, being often beardless, emasculate their enemies, lest they should be taunted with having slain women; nor do they often spare their prisoners. The blades of the native swords and lances are, as a rule, of soft iron; and I was told that the iron ore in some parts of Ethiopia is so pure that the people are able to forge it in its natural state. The shafts of the lances are first dried over a fire, and then rubbed well with butter, to render them tough; the best are of lance wood. Not a few of the people of Tigre possess guns, and are reputed good shots; for as their country is near the coast they have always been better supplied with arms than the other Abyssinians. Bruce says that Ras Michael used to allow no less than five hundred slaves to be exported annually from Massowah in exchange for fire-arms from Arabia, the possession of which gave him the superiority over the rest of Abyssinia. The powder made in the country is very weak and bad, but this is perhaps fortunate, as an ordinary charge of English powder would irremediably damage most of the native guns, the bullets for which are frequently merely pieces of slate cut into a conical shape, in imitation of our rifle bullets.

Habash was the name given by the Turks to Abyssinia: it comes from an Arabic word signifying confusion, and is supposed to have been applied to

Abyssinia on account of the mixture of races there.* At first it was considered a term of reproach, and used only by the Turks; but in time the Abyssinians themselves got to answer to the name, and use it, and in the present day Habash is the only appellation by which Abyssinia is known in the East.

Habash contains four or five million inhabitants. It has been ruled from time immemorial by a king, or *Negous*, who associates himself with the religious traditions of the country by claiming descent from Solomon, and bears the title of King of Kings, in remembrance of the forty-four provinces, bearing officially the name of kingdoms, into which Ethiopia was formerly divided. The present king, in his letters to the British Government, styles himself, "The King of Kings, John of Ethiopia and all its dependencies." Only those who *are*, or at least *claim* to be, descended from the royal dynasty founded by Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, can assume this title, but, as in the cases of Ras Michael and Dedjatch Oubi, powerful chiefs have from time to time risen up and usurped the government of the country into their own hands; and few kings have reigned long in Ethiopia without being involved in continual wars with their great feudatories.

The power of the kings of Abyssinia is limited by the Book of Laws, nor can they change any of the laws in this book. Their actual power, however, over the lives and property of their subjects individually is absolute.

* See Ludolphus.

Like the kings of mediæval Europe, they are feudal sovereigns, and, as was the case in Europe, the common people belong to the land, not the chief, and change allegiance when the land changes hands. In the sixteenth century Abyssinia extended along the western side of the Red Sea as far as the 7th degree of North latitude, but it is now confined within the limits I have before mentioned.

All the princes governing the various provinces nominally owe allegiance to the King of Kings, but some of them bear the title of king in the countries over which they rule; and the Negouses of Ethiopia have not always been able to command their obedience. The provinces are divided into districts, each of which has its chief; and almost every village has a shoum, or head man, who is responsible to his chief for the taxes due from his village: the chief, in his turn, is responsible to the ruler of the province for the money due from his district; and the governor of the province pays his tribute to the king. The taxes are levied partly in kind and partly in money, salt and pieces of cotton cloth being received as money. Of course, after passing through so many hands, only a small proportion of the tithes paid in the whole country ever reaches the royal treasury, and to remedy this evil, the late King Theodorus appointed officers of his own to collect all the taxes, and himself paid the revenues due to his chiefs; but this system was discontinued at Theodorus's death.

Some of the chiefs are entitled to have drums, or

other musical instruments, according to their rank, borne before them on state occasions, and when they go to battle; their titles indicating the instruments they have a right to. Just as if we were to say, instead of dukes, marquises, and earls, "Their graces the big drummers, the most noble the long trumpeters, their lordships the bones," &c., &c. I need hardly here remark that the bones are instruments that I have only seen in the hands of Ethiopian serenaders *out* of Ethiopia, though it is a curious fact that Ethiopia appears to have been celebrated for her minstrels even in ancient times. We are told, in the dissertation on minstrelsy prefixed to Riston's "Ancient Metrical Romances," how John of Rampagne, a minstrel, stained himself black, and passed himself off as an Ethiopian minstrel, to effect the escape of Adulf de Bracy. However, I can't think that music is at all the *vocation* of the Abyssinians, though they are certainly fond of it. The native traditions affirm that St. Areed was first struck with the idea of composing the Abyssinian church music by seeing three birds singing on a tree, their number reminding him of the Holy Trinity. He was inspired with the notion of inventing a musical instrument, and forthwith invented a sort of rattle, which is used to this day by the priests to accompany their chants. Delighted with his new musical (!) instrument, St. Areed went with it to the king, and began to perform. History relates that the king was so absorbed in the charms of the music that he inadvertently rested the point of his spear on Areed's great toe, and grace-

fully reclining his weight on it, pinned the worthy Saint to the ground. My own opinion is, that the astute monarch resorted to this as a last and desperate resource to induce the Saint to bring his performance to an end; but if this were his intention he was disappointed, for Areed was so carried away with delight at his own harmonies, that he never even noticed the accident, though the ground was covered with his blood. This story is depicted in two paintings in one of the native churches.

"The Abyssinian race," says Lejean, "bears all the anthropological and ethnological characteristics of an Aryan origin. It is divided into two branches, the people of Amhara to the S.W., and the people of Tigre to the N.E. The Galla races to the S., though possessing an entirely different language, also bear some traits of relationship with the Abyssinians. The people of Tigre speak a language of Semitic character, but the language of the people of Amhara—though much of the Tigre has infused itself into it—has elements characteristic of the Aryan language, and especially of some of the dialects in the neighbourhood of Cashmere. It has been supposed that the Abyssinians are the people who were called by the ancients Troglodites, or flesh-eaters, in contradistinction to the Rhizophages, a people who lived on the banks of the rivers of the island of Meroe, and were said to eat nothing but roots."

Some travellers are of opinion that the races that originally occupied the highlands of Abyssinia were black, like a few of the tribes now inhabiting the lower valleys. This may have been the case, but the Abys-

sinians of the present day have certainly very little of the negro element about them, and their dark colour is to a certain extent the effect of climate; for they become much lighter in colour when removed to Europe. My own opinion is that the aborigines were never more than a dark brown in colour, like the Witos, who live on the shores of Lake Tzana, and many of the races that were seen by Livingstone quite in the interior of Africa.

Of the ancient history of Ethiopia we know but few reliable facts, for the native traditions are a tissue of fables of the grossest kind. The old Arab writers knew scarcely anything about the country, and those modern authors who have endeavoured to throw some light on the early history of Abyssinia, have often, perhaps, only made confusion worse confounded. Marianus, Tellez, Rüppell, Victorius, Ludolphus, Lejean, Salt, Heuglin, Bruce, &c., have all given us lists of kings, but, unfortunately, they all differ, and after vainly endeavouring to reconcile a mass of contradictory evidence, the student of Ethiopian history only has the negative satisfaction of learning, like the ancient philosopher, how *little* he really knows. The native genealogies all go back to Menelick, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, as the founder of the royal dynasty; and, if we are to give credence to the Abyssinian records, we must believe that Ethiopia was at least partially civilised twelve hundred years before our era; but, though the native genealogies were known in Europe as early as the sixteenth century, and generally credited until

Bruce's time, more modern writers have been inclined to regard them as fables, and to look on the author of the famous inscription at Adulis as the first king who really ruled supreme over the whole of Abyssinia, and laid the foundations of her power. This inscription has been transmitted to us by an Alexandrian merchant, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who copied it in the sixth century, and, according to M. Vivien de Saint Martin, has for its author the King of Axum, called in the native chronicles Ela-Aouda. It records the conquest of Abyssinia and part of Arabia by a prince, who calls himself "the first and only king of his race," and who gives a long list of the provinces he has brought under his rule, which is interesting from its being the earliest record we have of the geographical divisions of the country. The king goes on to say how he has established peace and order throughout his dominions, compelled the people to pay him tribute, opened his communications with Egypt, abolished brigandage in Arabia and piracy on the Red Sea, and finally, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, had this inscription carved on a throne of white marble, consecrated to Mars, at the port of Adulis on the Red Sea, which for many centuries afterwards continued to be the gate of Ethiopia, and the great emporium of the trade from the interior of Africa.

I have said it is only the more important epochs in the early history of Abyssinia that we can trace with any accuracy, and it is even doubtful when she first emerged from a savage state; but it seems nearly certain that she already possessed the elements of civilisation

in the first century of our era, and had laws, monuments, an alphabet, and literature.

In the fourth century we find Abyssinia converted to Christianity, and her influence on the Red Sea appears at that time already to have been considerable, which accounts for Fremonatum and Sydracum being carried up to Axum on the death of their master.

In the sixth century we find King Kaleb, the conqueror of Yemen, on the throne of Axum; and of his reign the Byzantine historians are able to give us some reliable details.

The King of the Himyarites, having massacred some Christians in Yemen, Kaleb, at the instigation of the Emperor Justinian, undertook the invasion of that country; and about the year 522 assembled at Adulis a fleet of ships, the planks of which were bound together with cords. Father Lobo, in his account of Abyssinia, tells us that the vessels most in use on the Red Sea are made of planks sewn together with thread spun from the bark of the cocoa tree, which tree alone will supply all the necessaries for building and outfitting a ship. Probably Kaleb crossed the sea in some such vessels: anyhow, he vanquished and killed the King of the Himyarites, placed a Christian chief on the throne of Yemen, and returned to Axum covered with glory and laden with spoils. But the new King of Yemen lived only a short time, and a fresh massacre of Christians took place, in which two hundred and twenty priests were killed; so Kaleb, again incited to the conquest of Arabia by the Emperor Justinian, once more resolved to

cross the Red Sea, and after a stormy voyage landed at Galafika, with an army of 30,000 men.

The Himyarite horsemen, though encased in armour, were utterly routed and destroyed by the stalwart mountaineers from Africa, and Kaleb, after bringing into complete subjugation the whole of the country, named Aryat, one of his generals, Viceroy of Yemen, and gave him 10,000 Abyssinian soldiers to support his authority, besides a great number of camp followers, who were induced to remain by the fertility and beauty of the country. Kaleb was now regarded as the champion of the Christian faith in the East, and, at the persuasion of his friend Justinian, even carried his conquests into Persia. However, in time becoming satiated with glory and riches, he sent his golden crown to Jerusalem as a thank-offering to Christ for his many victories, and retiring to a monastery on the top of a high mountain, like Charles the Fifth assumed the monastic robe, and devoted the remainder of his days to prayer.

We are told that during this great king's reign not less than 55,000 Jews were baptized in Arabia, but the means adopted for securing the conquest of that country appear to have been rather severe. It is said that Kaleb ordered his Viceroy, Aryat, to kill one-third of the male population, and send one-third of the women into Abyssinia, which order Aryat faithfully executed, enriching himself and his chiefs with the property of the slain, but acting with so little generosity to his soldiers that they revolted, and elected for leader one

of their officers called Abreha, who, following a custom still in use in Abyssinia, challenged his chief, Aryat, to settle the matter by single combat. Aryat, it seems, accepted the challenge, and wounded Abreha, but Abreha, calling on his servants to assist him, fell on Aryat and killed him unfairly, thus securing to himself the government of Yemen. By means of an abject promise of obedience, he also managed to appease the wrath of King Kaleb at the murder of Aryat, and to secure to himself the Viceroyalty of Yemen, once confirmed in which he set himself vigorously to propagate Christianity among the Jews of Arabia, built churches, dispatched missionaries to all parts of the country, and being rendered furious by the fanatical opposition of some of the Arab tribes, assembled a great army and marched on Mecca, determined to destroy its temple. Secure in his strength, he met with scarcely any opposition on his way to Mecca, and obliged the rebellious Arabs everywhere to render him homage; but a terrible and unseen enemy was awaiting to strike him at the very moment when his victory seemed most complete. This year (570) the small-pox for the first time visited Arabia; Abreha's army was utterly decimated by it, and he returned from the expedition with the shattered remnants of his once formidable host, only to succumb to the fatal malady himself. His two sons, who in turn succeeded him, both proved horrible tyrants, and caused great discontent among the people. One Saïf, an Arab Prince, tried to obtain the aid of the Emperor of Constantinople to throw off the Abyssinian yoke, but was

refused on the ground that the Abyssinians were the Emperor's fellow Christians. He then went to Persia, where he succeeded in getting an army of released criminals—for the Persians were afraid to trust their best soldiers in the Arabian deserts—and, after manifold misfortunes, at last reached Yemen, with 1,000 men, who were all that survived the journey. The Arabs, however, flocked to his standard in great numbers. Like the Romans, the Persians had burned their vessels on leaving the coast, and now marched boldly forward to conquest or death. Masrouk, the last son of Abreha, was killed by an arrow which struck him between the eyes; the Persians were everywhere victorious, and the Abyssinians forced to submit or fly the country, till some twenty years later, when the revolt of a regiment of Abyssinians, which the Persians had been incautious enough to maintain, again placed an Abyssinian on the throne of Yemen for a brief space; but this was only the last flash of a dying lamp. The King of Persia sent an army of 4,000 men into Yemen, which completely vanquished the Abyssinians, and put to death every one of their race that was found in the country, so as to eradicate all trace of their occupation of it. Thus after little more than half a century the Christians lost their dominion in Arabia, a dominion which, had it lasted—says the historian Gibbon—would have crushed Mahomet in his cradle.

Though at the commencement of the sixth century Ethiopia was powerful, prosperous, and to a great extent civilised, she appears not to have occupied herself again

with Yemen, and we know but little concerning the immediate successors of Kaleb, except that it was in the reign of one of them, called Gebra Moskal—a peaceful and pious prince—that St. Areed, of harmonious memory, invented his church music.

In the first half of the ninth century, we find Abyssinia visited by a plague, a disastrous war, and internal troubles. At the beginning of the tenth century we read of a revolution at Axum, caused by an Abouna, who having much influence with the King, chose the King's youngest son as successor to the throne, to the prejudice of the elder child.

About the year 960, Judith, a strong-minded Jewess, the daughter of Gideon, the King of the Falachas, being desirous to secure the crown of Abyssinia for a son of hers, had the members of the Solomaic dynasty, who were all kept the victims of a rigorous etiquette at the Convent of Debra Damo, massacred to the number of 400, and thus reigned over Abyssinia without opposition. A young Prince named Delnaod, of the royal family of Solomon, had however managed to escape the general slaughter of his race, and, taking refuge in Shoa, continued the royal line, which was destined afterwards to be restored to the Abyssinian throne. Meanwhile, Judith was succeeded by five kings of her blood, after whom the throne somehow reverted to a Christian king, though he was not of the family of Solomon. During all this time the Abounas appear to have played an important part in Abyssinian history, and to have been the

subjects of endless intrigues. About the middle of the twelfth century, we find the crown of Abyssinia in the hands of a usurper, who, having quarrelled with his Abouna, sent to Alexandria for another; but the Patriarch refused to send him one, and was in consequence thrown into prison by the Soldan of Egypt, who appears to have been on friendly terms with the King of Abyssinia. It is interesting to know that the stout old Patriarch still persisted in his refusal to send a new Abouna to Abyssinia, notwithstanding his imprisonment.

At the commencement of the thirteenth century, there reigned a King named Lalibela, on whose lips a swarm of bees had descended at his birth, as a sign—according to the native traditions—that he would make the happiness of the nation. The prophets, though in their own country, for once augured right, for he was a good prince, who received the persecuted Christians from Egypt, and has had many miracles related of him. Indeed, the thirteenth century was an important and happy era in Abyssinian history, for it saw the restoration to power of the old Solomaic dynasty, in the person of Jeknno Amalak, the ninth descendant of Prince Delnoad. He appears to have regained his ancestral throne in consequence of a bloodless revolution directed by the Abouna, who, however, made the stipulation that the new king, in return for his services, should give him one-third of the kingdom; and also had the important law passed decreeing that all future Abounas should come from Alexandria, and that none

of the Abyssinian priesthood should be thenceforward eligible for the office, by which means he effectually prevented the native nobles from attempting to increase their power in the state by placing their relations at the head of the church, a policy so common among the great families of Europe during the middle ages. Jeknno Amalak appears to have maintained friendly relations with the Soldan of Egypt, though he is accused by Arab writers of having persecuted the Moslems. His son, Jabka Tizon, however, not only did not persecute them, but wrote to the Soldan in 1290, telling him that he was of a different disposition to his father, and begging him to show the same mercy to the Christians of Egypt that he showed to the Moslems of Ethiopia.

The commencement of the fourteenth century ushered in those religious wars which for so long raged between the Christians of Abyssinia and the Moslems of the low countries. Jabka Tizon had been succeeded by his six brothers, the youngest of whom left a son, Amada Tizon, who, on coming to the throne, not only took into favour his father's mistress, but married two of his own sisters, conduct which caused him to be excommunicated by an Abyssinian monk called Honorius. This bold priest was stripped and publicly scourged, by order of the king; but the following night the town of Tegulet was destroyed by fire, and as the people looked upon this as a Divine punishment for so odious an act, the king found it expedient to regain his popularity by seizing the first opportunity of declaring

himself the champion of the Christian faith against the Moslems. Thus, from an unworthy beginning arose a religious struggle, which was destined to awake feelings of rivalry and hatred between the Christians of Abyssinia and their Mahometan neighbours, that have survived to the present day.

All through the fourteenth century Abyssinia was distracted by wars with the Moslems without, and rebellions of the Abyssinian Moslems within, which, however ended towards the beginning of the fifteenth century, with the complete defeat of the Mahometans, and the restoration of peace and order for a brief space by David the First, surnamed the Lion; but David was killed by a fall from his horse, and he was succeeded by his son Theodorus, who reigned only a few years. Then came Theodorus's brother Isac, under whom the wars with the Moslems re-commenced; they, however, were brought to a happy conclusion by another complete victory on the side of the Abyssinians, in 1430. In 1435, we find Abyssinia again visited by the plague, which numbered the Negous among its victims, the fourth king who had occupied the throne since Isac.

Zara Jacoub, Isac's brother, now became king, and appears to have interested himself deeply in religious matters. He is even supposed by some to have sent a deputation from the Abyssinian convent at Jerusalem to represent the Ethiopian Church at the Council of Florence, in 1437. M. Lejean, whose chronology I have principally followed, suggests that it was perhaps to these Abyssinian monks that Fra Mouro, the Vene-

tian geographer, was indebted for the knowledge of Ethiopia he undoubtedly possessed. Zara Jacoub also attempted to alleviate the condition of the Christians in Egypt by renewing amicable relations with that country; but during the reign of his successors, Beda-Mariam and Alexander, the wars with the Mahometans broke out again with fresh vigour. After Zara Jacoub's death in 1468, the country appears to have been for some time without an Abouna, owing to the new king's wishing for an Abouna from Rome instead of from Alexandria.

In 1490, Covilham arrived in Ethiopia, and the beginning of the sixteenth century brought the terrible invasions of the people of Adal, who, receiving perpetual reinforcements from Arabia in exchange for Christian slaves from Abyssinia, continued their devastating attacks on the country, till the death of their giant leader Graign, who was nine feet high—according to native legends—and was killed by nine bullets fired into him by nine Portuguese musketeers, who levelled their nine matchlocks at him simultaneously.*

I have already told the story of the Portuguese occupation of Abyssinia, and of its subsequent isolation from all communication with Europe. Of the gradual decline in power of the royal dynasty of Solomon; of the temporary government of chieftains who were utterly unconnected with it; and finally, of the

* Nine is a favourite number with the Abyssinians, who consider it especially lucky from its being three times three, or a treble trinity of numbers.

daring usurpation of the crown by Theodorus II., who skilfully silenced opposition by boldly claiming it as a right, I have not room to speak, in a work of this kind. This brief notice will have been enough to show that the ancient history of Abyssinia was much the same as the history of many of the countries of Europe in the early feudal times.

A king ever struggling against the power of his great nobles; great nobles ever endeavouring to enlist the influence of the church; a church taking an important part in the direction of the state; an occasional crusade against the Moslem; the invasion of a foreign power; the rise and fall, now of a hero, now of a tyrant; an occasional rebellion; a royal assassination; and the visitation from time to time of a devastating plague, made up the history of the country, as it made up the history of not a few countries that are now in a high state of civilisation. But Abyssinia has *not* become civilised. She has remained stationary, and her history of to-day is the same as her history of eighteen hundred years ago. Why should this be so? The Abyssinians are not a hopelessly backward race like some of the negro tribes; on the contrary, Abyssinia probably had her monuments and literature while Britain was still in a state of the most primitive barbarism. Neither do the Abyssinians die out before the effects of modern civilisation, like the Red Indians, and the Portuguese found them apt and willing pupils during their short stay in the country. The reason, therefore, of the Abyssinians being still in so un-

civilised a condition, lies *not* in any mental or physical defect of the people, but in some external cause, the study of which must be interesting to all who really have at heart the advancement in civilisation of the human race.

In the following chapters I shall simply relate what befell me *personally* during my visit to the Court of the King of Ethiopia, and my subsequent journey through the Soudan; for I believe that the causes which retard civilisation in this part of Africa will be best explained by the plain description of the present state of the country and its people, afforded by the daily entries in a traveller's journal.

CHAPTER XV.

DIFFICULTIES OF STARTING—I BID GOOD-BYE TO ADOWA.

We had now been nearly three weeks at Adowa, and the effects of the hot sun and want of exercise were beginning to tell on our party. Father Louis was suffering from fever; K. and R. were far from well; Baulo had continual returns of his old attacks; and even Mustafa the strong was ailing. Gradually, too, a spirit of insubordination began to spread among the servants, who, having nothing to do, were continually quarrelling. We soon discovered that old Hadgi Achmed was trying to exercise his influence over our native boys, on the plea of his having procured them their places. This led to a grand *coup d'état*, and we forbade the Hadgi to approach the camp, telling the boys that if they obeyed our orders only, they had nothing to fear from him, at which they were very joyful; however, in revenge, the Hadgi went about declaring that we were going to decoy these lads into a terrible country from which they would never return alive, and so induced one or two to run away, and made it difficult for us to get others. Besides

these inconveniences, I foresaw that I must be prepared to begin my homeward journey before long, for I had duties calling me back to England in the autumn; and though I had applied for leave, it was long since I had received any letters, and I was forced to suppose that my Colonel had been unable to obtain it for me. It was therefore clearly becoming necessary to get forward *somehow*. We again visited the Ras, and offered to ride back with our own servants, in search of the missing baggage, but as usual he promised faithfully that we should have it next day; and when, next day, we reproached him for not keeping his promise, and told him we were determined to go back for the baggage ourselves, he at last frankly confessed that he could not let us leave Adowa until he had heard from the king; at the same time, he amiably intimated that if we found time hang heavy on our hands, he would supply us with wives to amuse us. We declined the matrimonial offer with thanks, telling him that all we desired was our baggage, and that, should it not arrive next day, he must give us a guide, and we would fetch it ourselves. But the day after the morrow happened to be a Sunday—the 6th of April—and the wily Ras urged that we could not travel on that day; he, however, promised us a guide for the following Monday. On Sunday we again visited him, to remind him of his promise. He was entertaining a large drinking party, and as soon as we were seated, called for more tedge, so as to drown any attempt at discussion. Monday came in due course, but it is

needless to say no guide came with it, though the Viceroy's factotum, Bellatingueta Musie, an old man with a head like a baboon, came and squatted in our tent for half an hour, making endless promises that were never to be fulfilled. I was now ready to abandon the baggage to its fate, but I knew that my native servants would not move without the permission of the Ras, and that it would be utterly impossible to pass the great mountains of the Semyen alone and without a guide; by means of a heavy bribe, I might perhaps have got one, but unfortunately the greater part of my remaining dollars were with the missing baggage, as the boxes containing them had been too heavy for us to bring forwards to Adowa, and I had therefore no alternative but to wait patiently till the king's wishes regarding us should be known.

It is difficult to convey an idea, to those who have not been in Africa, of the endless difficulties which the avarice, cunning, and mendacity of native chiefs, place in the way of a traveller. The utmost tact, self-control, and firmness, are necessary for him to get on *at all*. If he be too impetuous, the natives become what the French call *entêté*, and it is impossible to do anything with them. If he is too easy, and once dispels the awe which the dark-coloured races instinctively feel for a white man, his position becomes not only difficult but dangerous, and he may lose his liberty or perhaps even his life. If he be both patient, firm, and fortunate enough to resist robbery and baffle treachery without coming to a rupture with the na-

tives, he still has to encounter endless lies and false promises, and though at night-fall he may fondly think he has succeeded in overcoming every difficulty that lay in his way, he will often awake in the morning to find that he has all his work to do over again, for Africa is a land—

> "Where Nature's end of language is declined,
> And men talk only to *conceal* the mind"—

lying being only considered disgraceful when *un*successful. On the East coast too, the wild and rugged nature of the country tinges to a great extent the character of the people, who little fear punishment for their misdeeds, as their lofty mountains afford them secure shelter from pursuit. Formerly a great part of the coast of the Red Sea belonged to Abyssinia, and was jealously guarded by the natives. No foreigner was allowed to pass the frontier without the permission of the Emperor of Ethiopia, and the difficulties of getting into the country once overcome, it was almost an impossibility for him to get out again. It has been the custom of Abyssinian Princes when visited by a foreigner, to argue much in the following fashion:—Is this man a friend or an enemy? If he is an enemy, I had better detain him, as if I let him go free, he may do me some harm which I shall not know of in time to prevent; and if he is a friend, I had better also detain him, as he may be of use to me. *Ergo*, it is best to detain him in any case, as by watching him I shall find

out if he be a friend or an enemy, and can treat him accordingly. This policy has been followed in Abyssinia up to the present time, for not only have the Ethiopian kings been fully aware of the advantage of securing the services of white men, and availing themselves of their superior knowledge, but they have also had wit enough to know that the greatest safeguard to their independence is that the riches of their country should not be disclosed to other nations. Their belief in the existence of hidden treasures in the mountains is universal, and is the natural result of a profound faith in all things supernatural, which leads them to imagine that their inaccessible and fantastically shaped mountains must guard innumerable gold mines, and caves full of precious stones. They cannot understand scientific research; to them it is sorcery, and they believe that travellers only come to their country to try to get possession of the treasures that ought to be theirs. I have already said that after the massacre of the Jesuits, the Abyssinians for a long time feared the vengeance of the Portuguese, and the chiefs were ordered to watch narrowly all who might attempt to enter the country. The man, therefore, who helped a stranger became a traitor to his Fatherland, and though for a bribe a chief would often forget his country in thinking of himself, he considered that he was acting meritoriously in inventing every kind of lie to delay the traveller, knowing well also that it would enable him to make a better bargain for at last allowing him to

proceed. It was pleasant to find duty and self-interest thus going hand in hand, and it is not to be wondered at that even now each chief should make every objection possible to supplying guides, oxen, or porters, until he has made a bargain, which compensates him amply for the favour he believes he is conferring in letting a traveller pass; and to the native mind, the favour is no slight one, for the Abyssinians argue that nobody would trouble to come so far without some strong motive, or secret advantage to gain, and therefore it is only just that those who help the stranger should get their share of profit. To the simple imagination of the Ethiopian, Abyssinia is a land flowing with milk and honey, and you are placed under no small obligation by being allowed to see it. The priests also encourage the chiefs to be cautious in letting strangers come in or go out of the country, for they naturally have no wish that new religions should be propagated, which might interfere with their influence. And with regard to the common people, the only white men *they* know are the Turks, their hereditary enemies, who carry them off to slavery; they, therefore, too often look on a white man as a Turk, otherwise an enemy, who, though he may be feared, is not to be assisted in any way, and is always to be distrusted.

Such are a *few* of the obstacles that meet the European traveller at his outset, and combine to prevent his path being strewn with roses. No sooner has he pacified the cupidity, curiosity, and distrust of one petty chief, than another springs up, and the whole argu-

ment has to be gone through again, and so on, till *all* are content; even then, perhaps, one man, at the last moment, will wish to outreach the others, a dispute will ensue, and the whole negotiation be thrown over. It may be imagined what a time all this takes, with the delay of talking through an interpreter, the long pauses the natives often make between their words, and the amount of repetition, speech-making, and gesticulation that has to be got through before the simplest arrangement can be made; delays which these half-savages, to whom one day is as good as another, prolong as much as possible, under the notion that by sheer force of watching a European long enough, they will learn the secret which they believe he possesses for discovering the hidden treasures of the earth. After all they are not wrong in supposing that some white men know this secret, but they are far from guessing that it is by steady labour and not by magic that these treasures are to be gained.

At last, April 7th, a messenger arrived, bringing letters from the King of Ethiopia. His Majesty requested General K. to deliver to him, as soon as possible, the letters from the Queen of England and Earl Granville, with which he had been charged. He also wrote to say that having heard of our arrival in his country, he requested my brother and myself to visit him at his camp, near Gondar, where he would make arrangements to facilitate our shooting big game. He did not wish us to leave Abyssinia until he had seen us, but we were to consider ourselves his guests, and he

would send a General, and an escort of soldiers, to meet us at the River Takazze, and had already ordered Ras Bariaü to find us porters to carry our baggage, so that we might lose no time.

When we started from Cairo, we had intended the frontier of Abyssinia to be the farthest limit of our expedition, and now we were called upon to travel through the very heart of the country, almost to the sources of the Blue Nile, but it was clear that the King was quite a different character from Ras Bariaü, and that he would alone be able to ensure our travelling quickly, while without his authority we might be detained in the country indefinitely; besides which, anything was better than our present inactivity, so we at once decided to start for Gondar and the King's camp, with as little delay as possible; but when we went to the Ras, he still met us with the old, old story, that our baggage was on the point of arriving, but had not yet done so. However, at last, seeing that he could not delay us much longer, as the King's letter would enable us to get assistance from the chiefs of the country through which we should pass, he promised with a very bad grace, *Yohannes y mute*—by the King's death—that the next day he would send us men to make the final preparations for starting. At this we were very glad, for as the poet says—

"The food of hope is meditated action"—

and when an Abyssinian swears *by the King's death*, he rarely breaks his promise, as if a man uses the King's

name to ratify an agreement and does not keep his word, he is liable to be fined 500 dollars, and there are special officers who are privileged to have half the fine for themselves if they can discover any one who has incurred it. Almost all agreements between the natives are ratified in this way; each party swears that he will do what has been agreed, *Yohannes y mute,* and they then find two witnesses, who swear that they will be responsible for the contracting parties keeping their agreement and doing all that is virtuous, *Yohannes y mute,* nor are there many men who will dare to break such a contract. But when I was travelling through the country which had been lately conquered from Ras Warenia, it was necessary to make the chiefs swear, both by the King's death and by that of Warenia—*Yohannes y mute* and *Warenia y mute*—as they might have only considered themselves bound to keep faith when they used the name of their old lord.

Our servants had become so accustomed to an indolent life at Adowa, that they showed great disinclination to prepare for the road again, and declared they were all too ill to march. After a medical examination of them, it was resolved to issue a general order that they must all be well again in two days, or receive an application of the *giraff*—the long whip I have before described—followed, should they still complain, by a dose of tartar-emetic. The announcement of this prescription had the desired effect, and they all got well again immediately. But one of the General's servants was stung in the foot by a scorpion as we were return-

ing from a visit to the Ras. The scorpions of Abyssinia are very large, and the boy was in great agony for some time; to relieve him, we placed a very tight bandage round his ankle, made a cross cut in his foot where the bite was, and burnt the wound with muriatic acid to neutralise the poison, notwithstanding which the leg swelled to a great size, and the boy said he felt much pain up to his shoulder, on the side where he had been stung; however, after drinking about a gallon of tedge, he recovered from the nervous shock, and in twelve hours was able to walk again. In the meantime his fellow servants went out to look for the scorpion, in the firm belief that until it was killed its bite could not be cured. This idea is common to the Italians, who say *morta la bestia, morta il veneno,* a proverb which the Queen of Navarre's valet de chambre, Bonaventure Desperiers, quaintly cites to prove that an unfaithful wife should be killed, and *not* her inamorato. It is really amazing, considering how scorpions, tarantellas, and poisonous snakes abound in Ethiopia, that the people, who always go barefoot, do not more often get bitten, but I suppose the habit of walking over rocky ground makes their feet hard enough to defy the stings of most of these creatures, though it does not seem in any way to destroy their shape and symmetry.

April the 8th brought with it no baggage or guides, so we sent word to the Ras that we were going to pay him a little visit, but that astute chieftain, knowing what was coming, returned word that he was ill in bed; however, in the afternoon we went up to his house and

found him as well as possible. Notwithstanding all his previous promises, we could learn nothing of our baggage, and began gravely to fear that we should have to go without it. I therefore asked him to say once for all whether he would or would not send us guides and porters to enable us to start on the morrow, as I was determined—on the word of a Frank—not to tarry another day at Adowa. At this he only bowed low, and replied, *ishee*, that he would, and also that we should have our baggage without fail.

April 9th dawned, and an hour after sunrise we were packed and ready for the start, but the sun rose high in the heavens, and still there was no vestige of our guides or boxes. We went once more to the Ras, who now said that we must leave our baggage behind if we wished to depart so soon; and when we asked him why he had two tongues and had said *ishee*—yes—when he meant *idillem*—no—he replied that in his country it was considered a necessary piece of politeness to say yes to everything a stranger might ask, although they really meant no. This was a truly Eastern excuse, and I began to understand David in his haste crying out that all men were liars. We now asked the Ras, if we abandoned the baggage, whether he would give us a guide to go forward with us that evening, but he told us that only robbers travelled by night in his country, and repeated the old story that we must wait till next day. It is a curious fact that some of the Abyssinian races have a strange objection to marching at night; and, even when the natives are of a hostile disposition, the

traveller who encamps in their country need never fear a night attack; but there are other tribes who, on the contrary, *always* choose the dark hours for marching, and strive to surprise their enemies asleep.

Our reproaches to the Ras that he had kept bad faith, and was no better, if not worse, than an Osmanli —for had he not disregarded the first duties of hospitality?—almost drove him to tears, as theoretically the stranger is still sacred by all rules of African law, though it is only among some few of the Arab tribes of the desert that I have seen displayed that generous and real hospitality which looks for *no* future return, and chivalrously makes it a service on the part of the guest, to avail himself of all his host possesses that can add to his comfort or welfare. But this was not the case with Ras Bariaü; though ashamed at having his duplicity exposed, he was not a bit the less determined to delay our departure, and at last we left him, finding that further argument would only make him more *entêté* than ever. Father Louis was in some distress of mind at a report that the Abouna had ordered Prince Menelek, of Shoa, to allow no missionaries to remain in his country, but this story proved afterwards to be without foundation, though subsequently Father Louis *did* get made prisoner on his way to Shoa, and was only released through the influence of King Johannes.

Dr. Schimper called in the course of the day to bid us farewell, and made us a present of some bees'-wax candles of his own making; these candles were very welcome, as the greater part of our stock of candles

had remained with our baggage at Guddofelassie, and the native tapers were only threads of cotton dipped once or twice in melted wax, and consequently so thin that they gave little or no light, and were continually doubling up and extinguishing themselves as if they were ashamed of their own existence.

Towards sunset we held a council of war, and agreed to abandon our missing baggage for the present, and start without further loss of time on our journey to the King. Captain R., whose time was not limited, very kindly undertook to remain at Adowa, and bring on the baggage as soon as he should be able to get it, and I, having told the Ras that I would not remain another day at Adowa, determined to ride forward alone that night in the hope that when the Ras should see that we were not entirely dependent on him, and that I was fairly on my way to the King, he would be afraid to attempt any longer to delay the departure of our baggage. The General and my brother were to remain that night at Adowa, and to join me next day with the tents, servants, &c., at Axum, where I was to halt on the morrow for them to overtake me, for we trusted to procure the porters we required from the Ras when he should once realise that he could detain us no longer, and that we were resolved to proceed with, or without, his assistance.

Before starting I made a last effort to get Ras Bariaü to give me at least a guide, but he merely replied that it was impossible I should leave Adowa that evening. I fancy he was very angry at not having received a fare-

well present from us according to the African usage, but as he himself had detained all our heavy baggage, we had been unable to give him one, and we were not much grieved to allow his conduct to be its own reward.

General K. had a native servant called Wassie, a quarrelsome sort of fellow, who feared neither man nor devil, and was always getting into hot water; this man knew the way to Axum, and at K.'s request volunteered to guide me there that night, in spite of the Ras. At 10 P.M., therefore, I mounted my horse, and telling Mustafa to follow me on a mule, bid good bye to the camp. The night was pitch dark, and very cold; at first we made a great detour to avoid meeting any of the Ras's people, for Wassie thought the old chief might show some temper if he caught him helping me to leave without his permission. In silence we forded one or two streams that lay in our path, and then plunging into the mountains, were soon lost in their intricacies. We were dreadfully tired after a long day of worry and excitement, and when, after cautiously picking our way through the darkness for several hours, we at last reached the foot of the range of granite hills that partly encircles Axum, I called a halt under a great *daroo* tree by the way side, and lighting a fire, picketed the horses for the night. I offered Mustafa my brandy flask, but he was too good a Mahometan to touch it, though he was tired and faint, for we had been unable to procure any other food that day than a few pieces of dry bread. Wassi being an Abyssinian, was not so particular about drinking spirits, and helped

himself freely. We now collected some green stuff for the horse and mule, and wrapping ourselves in our blankets, which we had taken care to bring with us, prepared to close our eyes in the happy conviction that we had at last bid "a long good-bye" to Adowa. Soon after our two steeds also lay down beside us, with that confidence which is bred in animals by a constant companionship with man.

From time to time the stillness of the night was broken by the horrible cry of the laughing hyenas that were prowling among the rocks, but though they are the largest of their species in Abyssinia, we did not fear their attacks, for hyenas are thorough cowards at heart, notwithstanding their large size, and the great strength of their teeth. It is said that when they find a man lying on the ground, they gently paw his face and hands to make sure he is dead, and not only asleep, before they attempt to devour him, and I have been told that they are so cunning that they will know a weary and fainting traveller by the smell of his footsteps, and watch him patiently till he drops, before making him their prey. So foul are the habits of these beasts that they will even haunt places that have been stricken by the plague, and quarrel over the dead bodies from which the very vultures fly away in disgust. Like most of those animals that feed on carrion, they are hideous to look at, and appear all the more so because one only sees them when darkness is closing round, flitting about in the uncertain light like ghouls, and every now and then making the air vibrate with their

frightful laugh, which horribly resembles the hysterical laughter I once heard issue from the lips of a maniac.

The Abyssinians believe that blacksmiths have the power of transforming themselves into hyenas, in order that they may devour women and children who wander in the woods after night-fall. All workers in iron are therefore regarded with some awe, and it is supposed that they can cause people to be possessed with the *Buda*, or evil spirit, by means of an incantation performed by bending a piece of grass into a circular form. Should the grass break in the operation, the victim dies; but if the grass remains intact, the evil spirit possesses him, and he is seized with a series of very peculiar fits, which can only be alleviated by the most fantastic remedies, such as playing a *charivari* on all sorts of musical instruments, dancing, &c. There are, however, certain charms of which the *Buda* has such a horror, that, if the person possessed be touched with them, the *Buda* will confess how he may be exorcised. I may here mention that the *Buda* is essentially masculine, and if—as is most often the case—it be a woman who is possessed by him, she insists on being addressed as a man. Another peculiarity of the possessed people is that they are always trying to escape to the woods at night, where the blacksmith, who has enchanted them, is supposed to be prowling about in the form of a hyena, to tear them to pieces. Sometimes, by means of a charm, the *Buda* can be forced to reveal, through the lips of the person possessed, the name of the blacksmith who has worked the spell, and the relations of the

sufferer thereupon capture him, and threaten him with their spears till he restores their relative to health, or overcome by numbers falls a victim to the popular superstition. Mr. Mansfield Parkyns says that the paroxysms of people suffering from the *Buda* are very like epileptic fits, but I have never personally seen a case of this curious Abyssinian malady, and cannot therefore describe the symptoms. As for Mustafa and myself, no fears of the *Buda* disturbed our dreams, as we lay under the great *daroo* tree that night. Indeed we were so tired that we might perhaps have continued sleeping like Rip Van Winkel, for twenty years, had anything less brilliant than an African sun blazed on our eyes in the morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

SECOND VISIT TO AXUM—LOSS OF MY DIARY—AND JOURNEY TO THE TAKAZZE.

April 10th.—Less fortunate than the poor comedian whom Gil Blas saw soaking his crusts in the fountain, we breakfasted on dry crusts, but had no fountain to moisten them in. However, about 6 A.M. we reached Axum, and at once went in search of the High Priest, whom we found seated under a great wicker-work umbrella, superintending the building of a house. He was accompanied by a large party of priests, and his five sword-bearers, who seemed never to leave him. I told Nebrid Yasu that I was angry with Ras Bariaü, and had come to stay with him till my brother and K. should arrive from Adowa. He received me kindly, but as neither Mustafa nor I could speak Abyssinian, and nobody there understood Arabic, our conversation was mostly confined to signs and caresses, by which the old gentleman endeavoured to express his friendship. Hearing that I had been on the road all night, he bade me go to his house to eat and rest, which I was very glad to do, as I was far from well and in want of food. He then gave Mustafa a number of eggs—which one of the priests mysteriously produced from the folds of his

robe—and, having made our salaam, we retired to the house to have them cooked.

When Nebrid Yasu returned home, he awakened me, and proposed that I should visit "Caleb's Cave," a curious excavation on the side of a neighbouring hill, which had apparently been an underground tomb, with three chambers; but I could find no clue to its date or history. Towards evening, I rode out in the direction of Adowa to see if there were any signs of the arrival of my brother and the General. It was not long before I espied a party of native horsemen pricking across the plain, who, as soon as they saw me, galloped up, firing off their guns, shouting, and waving their swords and spears in the air, with all the warlike and *apparently* hostile demonstrations with which most of the African races delight to welcome a friend. From these men I learned that K. and C. were already on the road to Axum, with an escort furnished by the Ras, of which they formed the advance guard. I therefore made them accompany me to Axum, where we found the Nebrid, with a large party of priests, engaged in drinking *tella*. Indeed, some of the company had already managed to consume so much of this mild beverage that they were rather the worse for it, and I should think there were few guests present who had not drunk the best part of a gallon; everybody was therefore very gay. Presently, General K. and C. entered the hall, accompanied by all our servants. They said that they had had the utmost difficulty in getting away from Adowa, but that when the Ras

found I had really kept my word and was gone, and that they were prepared to follow, he at last sent them the guides, porters, and escort he had so often promised, and begged they would not speak ill of him to the King. There were, however, still no signs of the baggage from Guddofelassie; and Captain R. had remained behind at Adowa, to try to recover it and bring it forwards. Father Louis, also, had decided to stay with him till he could procure a sufficiency of porters to carry all his things; and my brother had left Baulo to be Captain R.'s personal attendant, as his other servants were all natives. Poor Baulo! when he saw his master going away, believed that his last hopes of ever again beholding his beloved "Gerusalemme" were for ever departed, and his tears fell fast.

We asked Nebrid Yasu to give us a different hut to sleep in from that we had before occupied, and were accordingly conducted to a large round house of mud, which Ras Bariaü had just had built for his own use; but though it was quite new it was already swarming with fleas, and we slept no better than before: probably our guards and servants who lay outside were better off than we were. It not unfrequently happens that the master is less happy than the man.

April 11th.—We were all up and preparing for the road at daybreak. I was careful to have my quinine, gun-tools, shooting boots, toilet apparatus, diary, and other necessaries which were required daily, all placed in a great double camel bag, called in Arabic, a *Zekibeh*, so as not to disturb the other baggage on the

march; for the native porters will often refuse to carry their loads if they are in any way altered after they have once been given to them, and there is endless quarrelling at every re-distribution of burdens. Even now, notwithstanding the small number of our party, and the reduced state of our outfit, we were obliged to employ five-and-twenty or thirty men, besides mules, to carry the baggage; and we had no small difficulty in getting them. Nebrid Yasu, however, lent us one of his mules; and at last we got fairly started on our way for the country beyond the Takazze, of which we had heard many wild stories during our enforced stay at Adowa.

Outside Axum a great crowd of natives had collected to see us, and as we were passing through it, one of the porters threw down his burden and refused to go farther. Wassie, who, as I have before remarked, was of a peculiarly combative disposition, immediately flew at him like a bulldog, and in a moment the whole crowd was in commotion—spears, swords, and stones were brandished in every direction; our servants clubbed their guns, which were fortunately not charged, and a free fight ensued, of which the dauntless Wassie was the central figure. Above all the clamour rose the shrieks of the women, who, collected on a rising piece of ground, gave vent with one voice to the shrill wail with which they lament their dead. The old Nebrid, who had accompanied us thus far, put up his umbrella, and without stopping to say good-bye, vanished from the scene. K., C., and myself, fearful that mischief

might ensue, forced our horses into the crowd, laying freely about us with our whips to separate the combatants; but my horse plunged and reared so much that I had to dismount lest he should trample on some one, for the natives were far too busy exchanging blows to take any heed of his hoofs. At last we succeeded in separating some of the principal combatants, who clung to each other like polecats, and ordering the servants to close up behind the porters, so that none might run away, we got clear of the crowd and continued the march. Poor Wassie had been rather knocked about, having taken a prominent part in the affray; but he was still cheerful, though apparently very much disappointed that K. had wrenched his spear out of his hand before he could stick it through a few of his antagonists. As *Punch* says, "Different people have different opinions."

We now rode south-west, between two ranges of prettily-wooded hills, which gradually converged; and after about a couple of hours' march we gained a stream and halted, for K. was so sick and ill that it was with difficulty he could sit in the saddle. Probably he had overtaxed his strength in the struggle of the morning. After an hour's rest we continued the journey, and traversed a great valley bounded on either side by mountains of grey granite. At the further end there was a deep ravine, with a stream at the bottom, the banks of which were clothed with a tangled mass of the most lovely tropical foliage I ever saw. Graceful palm-trees pushed their way up to the light through

the twisted creepers, which hung like beautiful snakes from every branch and rock; while the broad polished leaves of the bananas, and the darker green blades of the yucca and cactus, glistened like emeralds by the side of the stream, as it rippled noisily over the stones below. This little Paradise had its Eve too, a fair young girl, with nothing but a leopard-skin bound gracefully round her loins, who brought us a draught of fresh water from the stream in the hollow shell of a gourd, and as our cavalcade rode up towards the hills stood silently gazing after us with large wondering eyes, her light, girlish figure making a very pretty picture, framed in by garlands of wild roses, jasmine, and clematis.

After nine hours' ride, during which K. had suffered dreadfully from the hot rays of the sun, we reached a village, the name of which I have forgotten, where, having hung the top of our tent to the overhanging branch of a tree, to avoid the delay of pitching it, we sent for the chief, and obtained from him, after a little trouble, a supply of eggs, chickens, honey, beer, and about 200 pieces of *tef*.

This day was an unfortunate one for me, as when we came to count the baggage, the *zekibeh*, in which I had so carefully placed my diary and all other necessaries, was found to be missing, together with the porter who had charge of it. We at once sent a couple of men back to seek them, but they were never found, and I have therefore been obliged to describe much of our journey up to this point from memory.

April 12th.—K. was still very unwell, nevertheless we made an early start, our party being augmented by the *shoum* of the village and all his followers, who, according to Abyssinian etiquette, were bound to accompany us till we reached the district of another chief. Our way lay through a beautiful mountain gorge, full of flowering shrubs, wild roses, laburnums, and cactuses. Next we skirted the top of a steep hill, overlooking a fertile valley; and presently arrived at a small group of native huts, where our people raised a great outcry for *tella*, as the day was hot, and we had hitherto met with no water. Still continuing on the high lands we at last reached a stream, which, falling over great slabs of grey rock, formed into deep clear pools, that looked delightfully cool and tempting; smooth grassy banks, shaded by graceful mimosa-trees, extended to the water's edge, and seemed to invite us to stay here and pic-nic; so, yielding to the fascinations of the spot, we halted for a bath and breakfast.

Resuming the march, we passed the site of Gobasie's memorable battle, which I have before tried to describe; and towards sunset arrived at the top of a steep hill leading down to a wide and fertile plain, whither we descended, and encamped by the banks of a rivulet, while our servants went in search of the *shoum* of a neighbouring village, called Balas. When this chief arrived, he as usual made much difficulty about letting us have any food; but he was suddenly cut short by one of our native companions, called Bo-Galla, who, seizing a big stick, began to lay about him freely

among the *shoum's* followers, and possessed himself of a sack of corn for our horses; after which little episode the *shoum* became more obliging.

It will be seen that the gentleman enjoying the euphonious name of "Bo-Galla" was of a kindred spirit to the redoubtable Wassie. He was a long, bony, hideously ugly Abyssinian, who had been in India, where he had learned a little Hindostanee, and about half a dozen words of broken French, which led to his being nicknamed by his countrymen the *Franzoui*, or Frenchman. I believe he was proud of this sobriquet, for, instead of wearing the usual dress of his country, he always appeared clad in a pair of antiquated European pantaloons, so *old*, as Faustus Ludlam would say, that from the continual necessity of patching them up, not much of them remained that was not *new*. It may therefore be easily imagined that Mr. Bo-Galla, surnamed the Franzoui, though in his own opinion and that of many of his countrymen as elegantly dressed as Beau Brummel, was in reality the most disreputable looking of our party. He was not in our service, but, like many others, had appointed himself one of our attendants, in order that he might travel to the king's camp under our safeguard, and get his share of food with the rest of our people; in return for these small privileges he was always ready to lend a helping hand, especially in a row, for which he seemed to have a peculiar vocation, and on one occasion he did me good service, as I shall have presently to relate. Another of our self-constituted followers was

the former master of my bay horse, now travelling on foot, for he had parted with his mount in order to procure money enough to enable him to leave his wife at Adowa, and join the king. He appeared to have a *real* affection for his old steed, which it pleased me much to see; but I am sorry to have to chronicle the fact, that the day we left Axum he stole from my saddle bow the rope of raw hide called by the natives a *metchenia*. However, a *metchenia*, though of small value, is one of those things that an Abyssinian *cannot* keep his hands off, and it is next to impossible to retain one long, unless you sleep on it all night, and sit on it all day. Umbrellas in England do not disappear so frequently and mysteriously as do these ropes of raw hide in Ethiopia.

I must not forget to mention one other of our companions, who, as she belonged to the fair sex, ought properly to have been described first. She was a lady of Adowa, who had asked permission to avail herself of our escort to join her husband, who was with the king. She was tall, good-looking, and, I should say, about five-and-twenty years old. Her dress consisted of a long shirt of fine foreign calico, handsomely embroidered in silk at the breast and wrists; a pair of trowsers of the same material, also embroidered in silk and fitting tight at the ankle; and over all an ample scarlet and white *kuarie*, draped gracefully round her, so as to conceal most of her dress. Her hair was plaited like a man's, and her wrists were adorned with hoops of silver, as were also her ankles, her feet being

as usual, bare. She was accompanied by three or four women servants and some men armed with spears, who took care of her mule, which was handsomely caparisoned, with the ordinary high-peaked saddle and big-toe stirrups, for our fair companion, according to the custom of Abyssinian ladies, rode like a man. She was of a gentle and retiring disposition, and never spoke unless she was addressed; but her hardiness of frame and powers of endurance would have done credit to a life guardsman. A mule has not an easy pace, especially when the saddle is made of wood, as in Abyssinia; but this lady rode from sunrise to sunset, and, however great the heat, however long the march, never a word of complaint, or even of weariness, escaped her lips. At night she would light a fire a short distance from ours, and, rolling herself up in her *kuarie*, sleep with her maidens under a tree till daybreak, when she was ever the first in the saddle. She appeared to be incapable of feeling either fatigue or fear; and though the track she had to follow was often along the side of some tremendous precipice, and her mule had to leap and scramble over blocks of fallen rock, where a single false step would have been her destruction, the small, dark, well-shaped hand that held the reins never faltered in the least, and her nerves, like her constitution, appeared to be of iron.

In the course of the evening K. narrowly escaped being blown up by his own servant. C. and I were sitting in the open air enjoying the freshness of the night, and K. was asleep in the tent, where, as usual,

the revolvers and ammunition bags were hanging suspended to the centre pole, when his servant, Tedla, entered to light the candles, and not being able to find the candlesticks, had the luminous inspiration to twist a couple of lighted bees-wax tapers round the *lower* part of the tent pole, after which intelligent act he retired to his supper. K. slept calmly on inside the tent, C. and I chatted gaily outside, and in the meanwhile the bees-wax tapers burnt steadily down to where they were attached to the wooden pole, which soon caught fire. In another moment the flames were licking the canvas bags full of cartridges, and had we not fortunately happened to enter just then, we might probably have seen a very pretty explosion.

April 13th (Easter Sunday).—We were in the saddle at half-past seven, and riding parallel with the range of hills we had descended yesterday, crossed a fertile plain watered by running streams, the rocky banks of which were fringed with groups of graceful date palms, *kolquals*, and other trees, some of them laden with pyramidal clusters of flowers that quite scented the air. To our left were several isolated mountains, rugged and precipitous at the sides, but perfectly level and verdant on the top; and in the far distance we could see the grand peaks of the great Semyen range standing out against the blue sky, like a jagged row of teeth. After crossing a watercourse, where the dark opaque leaves of the tree cactuses contrasted in a very pretty manner with the feathery foliage of the palms, through which the sun poured a golden flood of light, we came

to a field in which a number of the *abba gumba*, or great Abyssinian hornbill (*Buzaros Abyssinicus*), were feeding. These birds had enormous curved beaks, adorned with red and blue wattles below, and a big horny excrescence above, which made their heads look preternaturally large. They were strutting about with the consequential air of turkeys, and their dark plumage glistened in the sun with the iridescent colours of a raven's wing. C. knocked six feathers from the wing of one of them with a rifle ball, whereat the whole flock rose up and fluttered away at a great rate, sometimes flying and sometimes running, till they were out of sight. While C. was pursuing them, he came across a beautiful snake, some two feet long. Curiously enough, it was the *first* we had met with, in a country where these reptiles are plentiful. We also saw some quills of porcupines near a watercourse, where they were evidently in the habit of going to drink.

About 10 A.M. we reached a deep ravine cut by a torrent, which was now only a puny stream running over the bed of white sand at the bottom. The banks on either side were so steep that we could scarcely get our horses down; and nothing could be more beautiful than the luxuriant foliage with which they were clothed. Garlands of sweet-smelling flowers brushed our faces and covered us with pollen as we scrambled up the other side, where the spreading branches of a mighty fig-tree invited us, and not in vain, to tarry for breakfast.

Resuming the march at midday, we passed the village of Adahtaro, which stands near the water-course.

Shortly after one o'clock, the chain of hills to our right ended and the plain widened; but there were still several isolated table mountains visible on our left. A couple of antelopes scudding away before us gave me a chance of trying the pace of my Adoweese horse, who proved himself very sure of foot during an exciting fifteen minutes across country. Presently we reached a beautiful grove of palm trees, where, though the day was not far gone, it was decided to halt, as K. was very unwell. Though still a young man, he had already been four or five times desperately wounded in the course of his military career, and had one or two bullets, still unextracted, in his body. Occasionally he suffered such fearful rheumatic pains, that he could hardly bear the motion of his mule; but, notwithstanding all this, he continued riding day after day with admirable fortitude and courage, so long as he had strength to sit upright.

As soon as our tent was pitched, the *shoums* of the villages we had passed, who still accompanied us, established themselves under different palm trees, where they each sat in state, surrounded by their people; and presently a string of dusky natives appeared, bearing on their heads round baskets of *tef*, which they had brought from some neighbouring village for the men's dinners. The name of our camping ground was Mai Taman, and it was a lovely spot to *look* at, but the

water was so black and fetid that we could not drink it pure. We therefore adopted the native plan of straining honey into it, which however only made it more sweetly odious than before. Towards evening C. and I went for a ramble through the brushwood. We had not gone far when we felt our rifles lightly seized from behind, and lifted off our shoulders; but on turning sharply round, revolver in hand, discovered it was only two of our native gun-bearers, who, unbidden, had followed us like shadows to fulfil their usual occupation. Thus these poor fellows strove to anticipate even our unexpressed wishes.

Certainly, masters who have the power of life and death over their servants, have a strong guarantee for being well served; but I am glad to say, that, during the whole of my travels in the East, I never *once* had to have one of my servants beaten, and I like to think that some better sentiment than mere fear, perhaps, made them zealous in our service. In my opinion, there is no greater mistake than to think that Africa's children, like donkeys, are best managed by blows and hard usage. A little kindness, and especially the application of strict justice, will go much farther to civilize them and develop the better traits of their character, as the life of our greatest traveller among them should teach us. The same treatment may also be applied with advantage to donkeys, animals for which I confess I have a great respect, for do they not often, while enduring greater hardship, render patient and faithful service more courageously than almost any of the

animals that have the misfortune to be the servants of man ? *

Following the sluggish Mai Taman as it meandered among the palm trees, we reached, just as the sun's disc sank behind the blue line of mountains on the horizon, an overhanging precipice of black basalt, down which the water plashed monotonously into a dark and narrow gorge, some 200 yards below, so choked up with palms and rank vegetation, that the rays of the sun never brightened the stream which here found its birthplace. No doubt further on the gorge widened, and the sluggish stream became a fair river, winding through sunny plains, and whispering as it went of the fertility it was charged to send down to the distant rice fields of Egypt. But here its unwholesome waters filtered silently through the tangled roots of an impenetrable jungle, where the lion and the leopard found their home.

When we pitched some fragments of rock over the precipice, we could clearly hear the rustling of the startled game as the stones crashed among the trees below; but the sides of the gorge were so perpendicular that it would have been a work of the greatest difficulty to descend into it, and as it was now nearly dark, we returned to the tent.

We found that the natives had kindled a number of

* Donkeys are highly valued by the Moors, and Father Jerome Lobo relates, in his naïf way, how a certain Turkish "Bassa" gave up [illegible] Jesuit missionaries in exchange for a wild ass sent him by the Emperor of Abyssinia, the shameless infidel thinking one donkey well worth two missionaries.

fires, round which they were squatting in merry groups, their dark skins, scarlet and white *kuaries*, and glittering spears, producing a very picturesque effect in the red glow of the firelight, which played fitfully on the rough trunks of the surrounding palm trees. A band of musicians, who, as a special honour, had been deputed by the Nebrid to accompany us, were beating drums and blowing wild notes on their long wooden trumpets, so we drew our folding-chairs outside the tent to listen, saying, with Shakespeare,—

> "Here will we sit, and let the sound of music
> Creep on our ears. Soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony."

And truly, though perhaps inharmonious in themselves, the wild notes of the drums and trumpets did not accord badly with the scene around us. The editor of Bruce's Travels tells us that the Abyssinian trumpet is often called *nesser cano*, or the note of the eagle; hence, in "Lalla Rookh," the lines,—

> "The mellow breathings of some horn or flute,
> That far off broken by the eagle note
> Of the Abyssinian trumpet, swell and float!"

Nor are the notes of these great horns, which are very like the Swiss mountain horns in shape, deficient in a certain warlike character, well suited to stir the breasts of a semi-barbarous people.

This day was my birthday, but all we could muster in the way of a birthday feast was a *gumbo* of muddy [illegible] and a couple of hard-boiled eggs. How different

from former birthdays! . . . . As the night advanced, the wind rose and whistled round the tent in a way that foreboded a hurricane before morning; and by half-past eight we were glad to seek the shelter of our blankets, for people keep unfashionably early hours in Ethiopia, where even the king goes to bed at sunset, and holds his levees at five o'clock in the morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RIDE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.—ARRIVAL AT THE KING'S CAMP.

THE remainder of our journey from Adowa to the king's camp, near Gondar, will be best described by a few extracts from my journal written at the time, to which I have merely added an occasional paragraph where necessary to complete the text.

April 14th.—Up before it was light; started at 6.20 A.M., and rode straight across the plain nearly due south, till we reached the foot of Beth Mariam, one of the series of isolated hills we saw in the distance yesterday. Followed the hills, passing Mai Shevini, and the heads of two other streams that flow down into the valley of the Takazze.

At 10 A.M. crossed to the other side of the hills, passing near the head of a river, and emerging on an extensive plain, watered by several streams, all running into the basin of the Takazze. To the right and left, isolated mountains rising above the plain; in front a magnificent panorama of the Semyen range, and overhead a cloudless sky. Saw in a wooded water-course numbers of dog-faced baboons, and a couple of large bucks of a red colour, which I tried to shoot, but both barrels

of my fowling-piece missed fire. This gun* has played me the same trick several times before, and it is evident the springs of the locks are too weak—a dangerous defect in a country where the game-bag may comprise anything, from a leveret to a lion. C. saw some more *Abba Goumbas* like those we encountered near Axum, and half an hour before noon we approached a village called Adega Shekha, and halting under a large fig-tree, despatched Wassie to procure some fowls. I think Wassie was born to get into rows, for we had hardly lighted a fire before he came running down to us in great disorder, pursued by the yells of the natives, who had fallen on him and beaten him. Luckily he had stuck to his fowls, which were soon skinned, broken up, and placed on an earthen dish full of butter and red pepper—the Abyssinian way of making a curry, and a very good and expeditious way too, only it requires a hardened palate to venture on a second mouthful, as at least one-half of the dish consists of capsicums. While we were breakfasting, our servants picked up our guns, and quietly slipped off on a marauding and pillaging expedition of their own to avenge Wassie. Fortunately we discovered their absence, and looked round in time to catch them *in flagrante delicto*, tripping nimbly off towards the village, with our rifles in their hands. Of course we at once called them back, but the order had to be very sternly repeated, and it was only when we

* A double-barrelled breech-loader, Webley's patent, by W. T. Smith, of Princes Street, London.

pointed our revolvers at them that they found ears to hear us.

At 2.20 P.M. we continued the march, and turning to the S.E., traversed a fine loamy plain overgrown with many beautiful aromatic shrubs. Two hours' ride brought us to the end of the table-land, and showed us a perfect labyrinth of gorges and defiles, leading down towards the Takazze. For some time we had been riding ahead of our people, and we now found that they had all disappeared. A horrible suspicion suggested itself that they might have gone by some other way, for in a country without roads there are naturally no sign-posts. However, a *Deus ex machinâ* was at hand, in the shape of a little dried-up old man riding a mule, who emerged from a neighbouring defile, and proved to be the *shoum* of Adankatu, a village near the Takazze, on his way to meet us. The descent now commenced, and we followed our guide through many winding valleys, where the foliage, of the same character as that of the Hamedo plains, showed that we were still some 4000 feet above the level of the sea. From time to time the *shoum* carried on shrill conversations with invisible mountaineers, who responded from the tops of the surrounding hills, and whenever a native chanced to pass us, the old chief always got something out of him, such as a little pot of honey, a gourd of *tella*, or a dozen or so of eggs, which these people seemed to carry about with them for the pleasure of the thing, and produced mysteriously from the folds of their *kuaries* in a way that would have done credit to a Robert Houdin. At last

we came to a level patch of barren ground, where the *shoum* suggested that we should pass the night. We felt very grateful for his hospitable intentions, but as we had ridden thirty-five miles, our porters were yet out of sight, and Adankatu was close by on the top of a neighbouring hill, we told him we should prefer paying it a visit. He was in a great rage at having his scanty hospitality thus rebuked; however, seeing we were riding on without him, he swallowed his anger and followed us up the hill to a big round hut which served as a granary, and stood in the middle of the village. We had not been here long before two messengers arrived from the king, who told us that Dedjatch Hailo* and a number of his *naphteñas*,† would meet us at the ford of the Takazze in the morning and escort us for the rest of the journey; they also told us that King Yohannes had ordered that the rocks and other obstacles should be cleared away along our whole line of march from the Takazze to his camp—a truly princely act of courtesy from an Ethiopian.

I afterwards heard that when the king passed the Semyen mountains with his army earlier in the year, great numbers of men, horses, and mules, lost their footing and perished miserably. An eye-witness assured me that he had seen as many as twenty women precipitated over one single precipice in the

* The title of Dedjatchmatch, though under that of Ras, is generally only borne by the governors of provinces and chiefs of high rank.

† A *naphteña* is a soldier who carries a gun or matchlock.

general crush and rush of the passing host. The cold, too, was intense, as the army followed a route which crossed the Semyen at an elevation of nearly *fourteen thousand feet:* but we were saved from this last inconvenience by the express wish of the king, who had desired us to take the rather longer road we had hitherto followed, through the plains of Sheri, which enabled us to pass the mountains at a somewhat lower point.

Adankatu, like all the villages in the neighbourhood of the Takazze, stands perched on the top of a hill high above the unhealthy valley through which flows the river. Bruce says that the mountaineers who inhabit these villages have been robbers from time immemorial. I trust this is an exaggeration; but they are necessarily a hardy and warlike race, as the ford of the Takazze is not far from the country of the Shangallas, and is exposed to the swift and devastating inroads of that ferocious people. From the brow of the hill we could see a great chain of mountains on the other side of the river which we were to cross on the morrow. Nothing could be more imposing than the vast panorama of jagged peaks that extended before us as far as the eye could reach, bathed in the cold calm beams of the moon. Far below, wreaths of poisonous white mist floated over the Takazze as it wound its way through deep glens, whose sides were clothed with impenetrable forests, the favourite haunt of elephants and other large African game, while on the lower spurs of many of the mountains the bush had been kindled, and

great fires were burning, which sent up spiral columns of smoke into the still air, and threw a lurid light over the surrounding crags and precipices. The tempest of the preceding evening had subsided entirely, and no sound now disturbed the silence of the night save the occasional baying of the watch-dogs keeping guard in the native villages, which stood perched like eagles' nests high up on the sides of the mountains, overlooking the great valley that divides Tigre from Amhara.

April 15th.—Our porters having come up in the night, we started at half-past six, after for once enjoying a good night's rest in a native hut. The descent to the Takazze was steep and difficult. Large herds of humped oxen were feeding on the mountain sides, and continually blocked up the narrow track, from which they were with great difficulty dislodged to make way for us. Like the place where the rainbow touches the ground, the further we rode the further the bed of the Takazze appeared to recede from us, and we were continually descending from valley to valley for nearly two hours before we at last reached the river, the shingly bed of which was entirely covered with water, though it did not reach higher than our saddle-girths at the deepest part of the ford. It was with joyful hearts we scrambled up the opposite bank and entered the kingdom of Amhara, where we found Dedjatch Hailo bivouacking in the forest and awaiting our arrival, with four fresh mules and about 150 *naphteñas*, or native soldiers, by way of escort.

Picketing our horses among the beautiful trees, C. and I went to bathe in the river, carefully selecting a place inclosed by rocks, for the king is said to have had several of his soldiers carried off by crocodiles when he crossed the Takazze with his army. We found the water quite warm, and the current was very strong. Among the trees by the river side I noticed a species of fig, the fruit of which grew in clusters round the trunk, instead of on the branches as in ordinary fig-trees. Everywhere the foliage and vegetation were luxuriant, and as game is said to abound in these forests, we bitterly regretted the detention of our cartridges at Guddofelassie.

At 11 A.M. we transferred our baggage from the porters to the mules that we had brought with us, and mounting the new ones, began to ascend from the river. It was fortunate our beasts were fresh, for they had to leap like goats over great masses of rock that blocked up a fearfully steep path, leading apparently to the clouds. Wherever there was holding ground for a few inches of earth the sides of the mountains were clothed with grass, but such grass! The Brobdingnagian bush-grass of tropical Africa, each blade of which was ten feet high and as big round as a swan-quill. In the wet season this grass would be a waving forest of emerald green, in which a man on horseback could hide; but now it was hard and yellow like over-ripe corn, though every stem still stood as stiff and upright as a young bamboo. An hour and a-half of hard climbing brought us to a small sandy table-land surrounded on every

side by endless chains of mountains. We passed a little hamlet from which there soon arose the shrill cries of women, for our *naphteñas* no sooner espied it than they rushed into the huts to take all they could lay hands on, but were of course ordered back by us, apparently much to the astonishment of the Dedjatch Hailo.

Abyssinian *naphteñas* have a bad habit of plundering all the small villages that lie near their line of march, and a traveller who has the misfortune to be accompanied by an escort, is often so effectually forestalled by his *own* soldiers that on arriving at a village he can get nothing to eat. Though we always sternly prohibited our men from pillaging, it not unfrequently happened that, where we had expected to see a smiling hamlet we found nothing but a few deserted huts, for the timid villagers would collect their goods and drive off their cattle into hiding at the very first glimpse of an approaching party of *naphteñas*.

The Abyssinians have feet almost as prehensile as their hands. One of our boys called Feynta had wrested a club from a villager, but seeing me approaching let it drop. I told him to pick it up and he did so, not with his hands but with his big toe, taking hold of it with his foot as easily as if he had been born a monkey, although the club was of iron-wood and rather heavy.

At 1 P.M. we halted for a couple of hours. C.'s mule was a regular little devil, and when we started again fairly kicked the saddle over its head with C. on the top of it. Towards nightfall we reached a

marshy hollow near a village called Mai Tamen, the *shoum* of which came to meet us, but would not let us have anything to eat; there was therefore no dinner. After about an hour he at last consented to give us a dozen eggs, out of *friendship*, as he said, but they were every one rotten, so there was no supper. Our baggage had been delayed on the road, so there was no tent; and the water at Mai Tamen was simply putrid, so there was nothing to drink. We had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing Dejadtch Hailo place the *shoum* in chains, and we obtained a little *tef* for our boys, but they were too tired to eat it when it arrived. I made a bed of branches and sought to sleep, but I was not at all well, and could not do so. In the middle of the night K., who was also wakeful, sprang up, gun in hand, shouting loudly to some natives who were prowling among our horses and, as he thought, trying to stampede them; but it proved to be a false alarm, so we returned to our leafy beds hoping that sleep might make us forget our hunger and thirst, till daylight should enable us to continue the journey.

April 16th.—It was 8 A.M. before we got our men started. Our road lay along a narrow track cut up the side of a great mountain, the precipice above and below was nearly perpendicular, and there was but little bush growing to stop our fall should the mules lose their footing; at last the track disappeared altogether, and nothing remained but a sloping surface of bare rock—the dry course of a mountain torrent. We dismounted and crossed it on hands and knees, even

the bare-footed natives passing with difficulty. My horse, who was led, trembled with fear as he felt his feet slipping from under him on the polished rock, and he slid to the very brink of the precipice where it fell sheer away to a depth of 900 ft. I thought I must have inevitably lost him, but fortunately he did not struggle, and we got him safely over. Further on we regained the track, and presently reached the top of the mountain, where we enjoyed a most magnificent view. To the left a stupendous precipice descended almost straight down to a green valley some 2,000ft. below, on the further side of which range upon range of the castellated mountains of the Semyen rose one behind the other like a series of colossal fortresses, the rude work of some mighty race of giants. These mountains, which are crossed by a *pass higher* than the summit of the Matterhorn, are of the most extraordinary and fantastic shapes imaginable, and even Gustave Doré would find the weirdest conceptions of his genius tame beside them. On our right we had a grand panorama of the mountain peaks and table-lands of the Sheri country, through which we had already journeyed, and before us a perfect labyrinth of mountains, valleys, crags, barrancas, and ravines extended in wild confusion as far as we could see. As we descended the mountain (I have said that in Abyssinia the road almost always goes straight up one side of a mountain and down the other) I noticed that the tall bush-grass had given place to great reeds, out of which the natives make the sticks of their spears. I also saw some iron-

wood. Many of the trees had sweet-scented flowers, but there were no leaves on the trees that were in bloom; there was one tree with a silvery white bark, which had a very strange effect, as the trunk, though often of considerable size, was generally tied into a complicated knot in the middle, and then grew up straight again; many of the bigger branches were also tied into similar knots. I imagined this to have been done artificially while they were still young, but the natives said it was a freak of nature. However, I am not quite certain about this, though I certainly saw one young tree, which, after growing straight in the way it should go for five or six feet, was beginning to twist itself up in a manner that would assuredly lead to its tying itself into a knot of a very Gordian description.

After two hours' march we reached the river Embuyer, where we met a native leading a small English terrier. The General asked him how he came by it, and as the man could not explain, he was beaten by Dedjatch Hailo's soldiers, who gave the dog to K. Probably it had formerly belonged to some officer in the Magdala campaign. Another peasant brought us some milk and ripe bananas. I think I never in my life enjoyed so delicious a repast as this fruit afforded us.

At 1 P.M. we resumed the march, but had not ridden for more than an hour before Dedjatch Hailo told us we had finished our journey for that day, and true enough we found our tent pitched in a green valley by a stream called Mai Loham, near to the little mountain town of

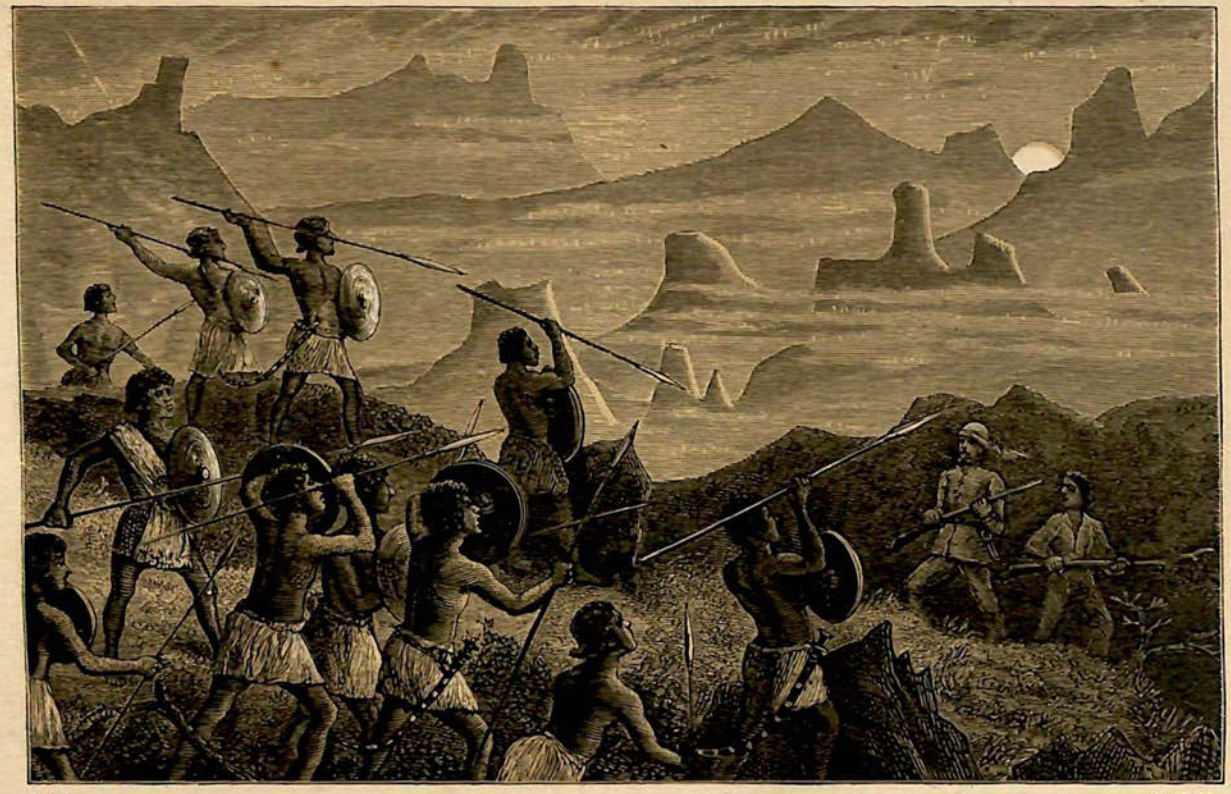
Angeri. I expostulated with old Dedjatch Hailo, urging that it was a good five days' ride from the Takazze to Gondar, and we had only four days remaining, including to-day, if we wished to be with the king for the Easter feasts.* The fat Dedjatchmatch was not, however, willing to be hurried himself, though he suggested that, if I liked to ride forwards *without* him, he would give me a man to accompany me to a friend of his, Dedjatch Negoussié, who lived in the Semyen, and would lend me fresh horses with which I could get on much faster. It was clear there was no hope of reaching the king by Easter if I remained with Dedjatch Hailo, who made a point of stopping to squeeze all he could out of each way-side village, so I accepted this offer, and ordering my horse and a couple of mules to be saddled, selected Bo-Galla, and my gun-bearer Sinké as my attendants, bid adieu to my brother, and General K., who gave me a letter for the king, and prepared to ride forwards alone. Guan Goul, another of my faithful gun-bearers, came limping after me when he saw me leave the camp, but as the poor lad had a bad foot, I sent him back to follow more slowly with C. and K., who had decided to stay with Dedjatch Hailo.

I rode steadily forwards till near sunset, the guide, whom I had obtained from the Dedjatchmatch, walking imperturbably in front, with a wicker-work umbrella over his head, at so fast a pace, that my two servants and I had to keep our beasts at a trot. We met

* The Abyssinians celebrate their Easter a week later than we do; it is their greatest feast, and I was very anxious to assist at it.

two men carrying *gumbos* of *tella*, from whom the guide claimed toll, en passant, and presently we abandoned the direct road to Gondar, and struck S.E. into some wild gorges of the Semyen mountains. On every side dark chains of granite peaks towered above us, casting long shadows across the valleys, and as the day faded, all nature seemed hushed into a profound silence. Occasionally we passed a deserted hut perched on the top of four high poles, which had apparently been erected as a look-out post by the mountaineers inhabiting this region—a wild race, many of whom still adhere to the ancient Jewish religion. Sometimes we skirted the edge of a dizzy precipice, at others picked our way through some darkly-wooded gorge, but each step led us higher and farther into the heart of the mountains and away from the track, all trace of which had now disappeared.

The night was fast closing in when we reached the edge of a tremendous ravine, so narrow and with such perpendicular looking sides that the bottom was lost in obscurity, though we could hear the rush and murmur of water far below. We dismounted, and drove our beasts with some difficulty through a dark jungle of overhanging trees to the bottom, where we forded the rapid mountain stream that rushed through it. The opposite side of the ravine was jet black, the bush having been fired along the whole mountain side, and from this dismal background the twisted stems and branches of the trees, denuded of their bark, stood out white and ghostly, like so many skeletons, a fit scene



A HOSTILE CHIEF.

for Dante's *Inferno*. I mounted my mule, who scrambled with me, cat-like, towards the top, which we had almost gained when Bo-Galla suddenly stopped, and my boy Sinké, taking hold of the mule's bridle, handed me my rifle without saying a word. I jumped off, and walking forwards saw that the top of the ravine was covered with armed natives, who stood in a threatening attitude, their shields before them, and their spears raised. About a dozen of them were skilfully stationed between the trees in advance of the rest, and the last rays of the setting sun shone on the broad blades of their poised lances with a most unpleasant glitter.

I asked Bo-Galla in French what all this meant, to which he replied, "*Monsieur, on nous refuse le chemin.*" I sprang forwards, but the spears of our adversaries at once began to quiver in a way that unmistakably showed that a single step further would bring them whistling through the air, and as their points were now not more than four yards off, I began to wish that, like Hacho, King of Lapland, I could blunt them with a look; or, at least, that I could exchange my flannel shirt for one of the suits of armour we had rusting at home. I had a prejudice against retiring; besides, the natives were already eying with cupidity my silver-mounted hunting knife, revolver, and double-barrelled rifle, and a retrograde movement would probably only encourage them to the attack, while to advance seemed to ensure our being turned into human pincushions. All this flashed through my mind in a few seconds, and yet I seemed to have plenty of

time to think. I was furious at the prospect of being speared like an otter by a set of *shouftas*,* in an out of the way mountain-gorge like this, but I knew that our lives might depend on our coolness, and, as we were unable to advance, I sat down with a careless air on the stump of a tree, and ordered Bo-Galla to ask for the chief, for methought if I can only once single him out, *he*, at least, shall answer for whatever may happen. But the chief was not in sight, and prudently refused to obey my summons, while his followers declared they would spear us if we attempted to pass. I now told Bo-Galla to say that I was a traveller, carrying a letter to the king, that I was not an enemy, and wished to harm no one, but that at the same time I was determined to fight my way if the road was refused me, and that I should fire unless the chief was at once brought to me or the road left free. To do Bo-Galla justice, he never flinched from the chance of a row, and, after delivering this speech, he began with the greatest steadiness to prepare his gun. As the cocking of our pieces sounded sharply through the stillness of the evening, I heard a hurried whisper pass from the spearmen in front to those who were behind that we were getting ready our *tebengers*,† and a last appeal to parley with the chief succeeded in producing from them a reluctant consent that Dedjatch Hailo's man, who was unarmed, should be permitted to pass and speak with him. Meanwhile, the mountaineers never moved from

* Bandits. † Guns.

their post, but remained like bronze statues, with their shields before them, and their raised spears pointed at our breasts, ready to cast them should we make a movement to raise our guns to the shoulder. At last Dedjatch Hailo's man called to me to come and speak with the chief. Bo-Galla whispered in my ear "Do not give up your rifle," and we advanced to the level ground at the top of the gorge, where we found the chief, surrounded by some fifty more of his people, who regarded us menacingly as we approached; they were mostly half naked, but all armed with swords, shields, and spears, and were ranged in a wide semi-circle, in the centre of which stood their leader, with his hand on his long curved sword. He was a tall handsome Abyssinian, of very dark complexion, and was clothed in a scarlet and white *kuarie*. Beside him knelt a negro with a great blunderbuss, or some such unwieldy sort of gun, which he held full cocked, and presented at my head. The fellow was trembling with fear, and I expected every minute to see him send it off, and blow either me or himself in pieces. However, taking no notice of him, I walked, rifle in hand, straight towards the chief, and asked him, through Bo-Galla, what he meant by opposing my passage. He replied by demanding why I came into his mountains. I told him that I carried a letter to King Yohannes; to which he and his followers only answered by shouting "Warenia," the name of their late prince. Now I knew that in travelling through Amhara to the king, we were to a certain extent traversing a hostile country, for the king had only succeeded in

forcing Ras Warenia to submit to him within the last few weeks, and these wild mountaineers were all Warenia's devoted adherents, and therefore regarded us as enemies. So I said, "You know that in the king's name I claim a right to pass these mountains, but I *also* claim your hospitality and help as a stranger, alone, and overtaken by the night." The chief at this appeared to become less hostile, and Bo-Galla put down his gun, but suddenly some hitch occurred in the proceedings, and the natives crowded forward, shaking their spears, while Bo-Galla sprang bank, and brought his gun to the "ready." I, however, now interfered, and addressing the chief sharply in a mixture of broken Abyssinian and forcible Saxon-English, told him if he intended to give me hospitality to do so, and if not, to say so at once and fight for the pass, as I was determined to continue my way, at the same time by an easy motion of the body I brought round the barrels of my rifle on a level with his chest, and began playing with the locks, which were at full cock, while Bo-Galla translated my vigorous harangue. The chief looked over his shoulder at the negro with the blunderbuss, but I had shifted my position till the chief himself was between that murderous instrument and me. He next glanced at his wild followers, but I told him not one of them should move till he had decided whether he would receive me as a friend or not; that I only asked security for that night, and that I should be grateful for it, but if he attempted to bar my road he should be the first to suffer. He then looked at me, and lastly at my

rifle, which was reposing quietly on my left arm, three feet from his breast, and, seeming to have taken a sudden resolution, said that I should be his guest, and asked me to follow him. It was no good now hesitating about the prudence of the proceeding, so I mounted my horse and rode through the darkness, accompanied by the whole band, who led me up a steep and rocky path far into the heart of the mountains. It was so dark that I could not see two yards in front of me, but sometimes I could hear the splashing of water below, and sometimes my companions led my horse by the bridle. At length we reached an open shed, built on a level shelf of rock that appeared to jut out from the side of the mountain and overhang a deep ravine. It was tenanted by an aged woman, who, at an order from my conductors, lighted a fire, and brought me an *alga* with a skin over it to lie on, while my beasts were being tied up, and the chief talked to his men in whispers. For a long time I sat playing with my gun in the firelight, wondering whether he was discussing cutting my throat, or what he should give me for dinner, but whatever may have been the subject, the *result* of his deliberations was decidedly satisfactory, for he presently brought me some currie, six fowls, twenty eggs, fifty pieces of *tef*, jars of honey, beer, and milk, and a supply of corn and grass for the beasts. He also told me that I might sleep in peace and security, for he pledged himself for my safety, and had placed a guard to watch the shed; from which I imagine there had been a difference of opinion among the mountaineers regarding

my treatment. The fire burned brightly, and presently the moon rose with serene beauty over the granite peaks of the Semyen, offering ample matter for the musings of a poet, or the studies of a painter. But we had a long ride before us on the morrow, and I only thought of recruiting my strength for it, so, commending myself to the care of Him to whose infinite mercy the traveller is ever indebted, I soon fell asleep, with my saddle for a pillow.

April 17*th.*—The chief entered the shed with only one attendant before it was light. He told me that the dwelling of Dedjatch Negoussié was a good day's march farther into the Semyen, and away from the road to Gondar; that if I went there I could not possibly reach the king's camp by Easter; and that, in fact, Dedjatch Hailo had deceived me and sent me on a wildgoose chase. This appeared to be confirmed by the absence of the guide the Dedjatchmatch had given me, who had disappeared in the night. The chief now offered to send a man with me as far as a village on the way to Gondar, where lived a friend of his, called, I think, Dedjatch Guan Goul,* who would supply me with fresh horses to cross the great tableland of the Woggera, which lies beyond the Semyen. As both my servants, being from Tigre, were utterly ignorant of the mountain passes, I gladly accepted this offer, and the chief asked me to remember his loyal treatment of me,

* The name of this chief is almost effaced in my journal; but it matters little, as even my hopes of assistance from this quarter were destined to disappointment.

and speak well of him at the court, where it seemed he was in bad odour, as there were prejudiced persons who declared he was little better than a chief of *Shouftas* or robbers. He then conducted me as far as the commencement of a narrow path which led down through a winding valley towards the road to Gondar, and giving me his attendant for guide, returned alone to his rocky eyrie among the clouds.

There was very little light yet, and we led our mules cautiously down the slippery track till we at length gained the bed of a river which flows into the Takazze, and is crossed by the path to Gondar. As yet it had been bitterly cold, but the sun soon began to peep over the surrounding heights, and by its light we saw a couple of little grey monkeys chasing one another near the water's edge, while a black and scarlet parrot screamed in a tree overhead;—they were the only living things we had met.

The French say that the first thought of an Englishman on a beautiful morning is, What can he go and *kill* (by way of sport, of course), and when I caught sight of the gaudy plumage of that parrot, I confess to having instinctively cocked my rifle; but I looked round at the dark mountain where I had seen the glittering spears pointed at my breast as the sun went down last night, and I had not the heart to greet its rising with the murder of the brilliant bird that welcomed us so noisily.

We presently struck again into the way to Gondar; but alas! only a few miles in front of where we had left

it the previous evening, and for a moment I felt almost tempted to abandon my project and return to C. and K., but the desire to succeed soon prevailed, and I determined to push on vigorously, and, if possible, reach the king's camp for the Easter feast, in spite of everything.

Now commenced a tremendous ascent, and for hours we climbed up interminable mountains, each one higher than the other.

The precipices are best described in the quaint words of the learned Ludolphus: "Between these mountains are immense gulfs and dreadful profundities; which, because the sight cannot fathom, fancy takes them for abysses, whose bottoms Tellezius* will have to be the centre of the earth. Nor did Gregory† describe them otherwise than as places most dreadful and formidable to the eye." Certainly there is something wonderfully grand and striking about the Semyen, and though I have seen much Alpine scenery, I never saw anything to surpass in majesty these dark snowless peaks that rise in the midst of tropical Africa.

As we gained the top of a great hog-backed mountain, surrounded by an amphitheatre of frowning crags, that looked like giant castles of grey granite, my mule began to tremble, and I shall never forget the effect produced by the low rumbling of an earthquake which shook the mountains, and was echoed back from rock to

* The Portuguese Jesuit missionary, Father Baltazar Tellez.

† Gregory, an Abyssinian monk, from whom Ludolphus got much of his information.

rock like the boom of distant artillery, till the whole atmosphere vibrated with the sound. My three native companions believed the noise came from the subterranean treasure caves buried in the heart of the Semyen, and they hurried their pace, for they said that the Demon of the mountains was abroad.

At midday we made a brief halt by a stream, the water of which we strained through a cloth containing honey, as it was not very good. Then came more climbing up interminable mountains so steep and rugged that it was with great difficulty my horse could be led over them, though he was unshod and as active as a mule; the sun, too, now blazed directly overhead, blistering our hands and faces, and making the continual exertion very trying. Perched high up on a mountain to our right, we saw an Abyssinian convent, where many coffee-coloured monks and nuns devote their lives, principally to singing the Psalms of David, and life is long in such a spot, for among these highlands—

> "So sweet the air, so moderate the clime,
> None sickly lives, or dies before his time."

Further on we passed beneath an overhanging precipice, from the top of which, in former days, a mere handful of the mountaineers who had revolted used to hurl great blocks of rock on the path below, and thus for a long time kept the pass in their own hands, levying a black mail from all who travelled by this road. Presently we came to a deep cup-shaped valley, into which we descended, and snatched a few moments' repose by

the banks of a river that flowed along the bottom, and was overshadowed by many graceful trees laden with scented flowers. Flitting among the boughs were some beautiful birds; one, of a bright turquoise blue, looked like a beam from a rainbow. However, we only tarried long enough in this pretty spot to water the cattle, and again continued the ascent, winding yet higher and higher into the mountains up the dry bed of a torrent, for road there was none.

We had heard for some time a banging and crackling sound like the roll of musketry, and, on entering a narrow gorge, perceived that the bush was on fire, and the whole side of the mountain in a glow. The noise was tremendous, and great columns of black smoke rose into the air, while every now and then a fallen tree would come crashing down into the watercourse red hot and blazing, to the great alarm of our cattle, who plunged and reared, and did not at all relish passing through the fiery ordeal. Sometimes the sparks swept right across the path, scorching our faces; but we continued to press on, for as the fire was travelling along the mountainside *towards* us, there was less flame and smoke where it had already passed than where the dry bush was fresh kindling.

At dusk we emerged, half roasted, on a grassy plateau, where we soon espied some huts nestling at the foot of a mountain. This little village is called Dibbe-bahr, and riding up to it, I sat down under a tree, while Bo-Galla went in search of food, but as he returned empty-handed, I went into the village myself,

and soon attracted a crowd of the natives about me, who all, however, declared that there was no food in the place; I pointed out to them some fowls running about, and at last persuaded them to show me into one of their huts where there was a blazing fire, and they presently brought me some eggs, a couple of chickens, and a wickerwork jar lined with hardened cow's dung, full of milk. Several women and children rolled themselves up in their *kuaries* and slept by the fire in the hut, while the men, as the night was fine, lay in the moonlight outside. I was tired enough, after marching for twelve hours consecutively, but I could not sleep.

April 18*th*.—Not having slept all night, I was up before daybreak. The villagers had promised to give me some corn for my cattle, but though I had told them I would pay well for it, not a grain did the poor beasts get, so they did not go to work very cheerfully. We now ascended the mountain behind the village, each one leading his steed. My little horse was just as agile and clever at climbing as the mules, the only difference being, that as his hoofs were larger, they did not hold so firmly in the crevices of the rocks as their smaller ones did. In the same way a goat is more sure-footed than a mule, because its feet are smaller; but the mules were not so intelligent as my horse in choosing their ground, and had an incurable mania for always going as near to the edge of a precipice as possible, an uncomfortable taste, which, in Abyssinia, sometimes costs the life of the rider.

As we climbed higher the sun rose behind the grand range of the Semyen, casting a rosy glow over peak and precipice, stealing into emerald valleys, buried deep in the bosom of the mountains, enticing airy wreaths of vapour from sparkling cascades that leaped noisily down their rocky sides, gilding the feathery leaves of graceful clusters of palms growing in sheltered places, and wooing all the birds to sing their gayest carol to the new-born day. But when we reached the top of the ascent the scene was entirely changed. We now found ourselves on a narrow plateau overshadowed by a frowning precipice that rose almost perpendicular to a height of more than five hundred feet, and was only accessible by one single path; here we could no longer enjoy the rays of the sun, for this mighty wall of rock, at the base of which grew a dank and tangled jungle, threw a dark cold shadow across the plateau that chilled the very air, and cast an oppressive gloom over the whole scene. No "birds that warble to the morning sky," no "birds that warble as the day goes by," were to be heard now. A solitary white vulture was the only living creature visible, and it appeared to consider itself the monarch of this dismal spot, for it hardly deigned to move from the path as we advanced. The guide given me by the mountain chief told a weird story—how the natives of a village near the top of the precipice were one night startled by hearing the clattering hoofs of a runaway steed sweep past their hamlet bearing its struggling rider with fearful rapidity towards the abyss beyond, how for a moment the two

forms were seen clearly in the moonlight at the edge of the precipice, and how then a terrible cry rang through the night-air, and horse and rider plunged into space, nor were ever found again. A young wife and her little ones watched daily in one of the fair valleys near the lake of Dembea, for the return of the warrior who had left her to join the king, but whose step never again crossed the threshold of their thatched hut beneath the flowering mimosa trees, though on moonlight nights those who had the evil fortune to be belated in the sinister spot where we now were, might sometimes see the shadowy figures of a horse and its rider bounding wildly over the edge of the abyss, while the death-cry would again ring through the night, and be taken up and prolonged by the panthers and hyenas in the jungle below.

The jungle at the base of the precipice was so rank and thick that it was with difficulty we found the path through it, and the ascent was partially blocked up by fallen fragments of rock. Among these was a peculiar stone of a fine dark-green colour, very like malachite in its texture and appearance. At last we reached a level plain at the top of the precipice, which was the commencement of the great table-land of the Woggera, ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. Here we again enjoyed light and sunshine, and were able to rejoice that we were at last fairly across the Semyen chain, up and down the interminable defiles of which we had climbed so much of late, that the very sight of granite was odious to me. The mountain scenery had been

splendid to a degree, but we had been having such a very liberal supply of it that I wished for no more at present, and could almost sympathise with the French author who, when invited by an enthusiastic friend to climb up Ben-Lomond, replied,—*Aimez-vous les beautés de la Nature? pour moi, je les abhorre.*

Not far before us lay the village where I was to get fresh horses, but the Dedjatchmatch who was to have found them for me was not there, and no vestige of a horse was to be had for money or love (the usual order of the alternatives in Africa); so I was again doomed to disappointment, while my own cattle, which I had hoped to leave here, were wearied by the forced marches of the preceding days. However I succeeded in getting a well-disposed native to let me have a skinful of corn for them, though we could get nothing for ourselves.

I noticed in this place some birds with black plumage, white heads, and large curved beaks of enormous thickness, evidently a large-nosed or Israelitish variety of the raven kind.

When the beasts were refreshed I mounted my horse, as we were now again on level ground, and pushed steadily across the plain for more than eleven hours. The country was principally pasture land, and I saw little to remark save some large caves cut in a rock by the roadside, which, however, bore no traces that indicated their origin. Our guide had returned to his mountain home, and we found our way as best we could, occasionally obtaining information from a passing native. We saw scarcely any villages in the whole course of the

ride; for in this part of the country the villages are all built off the road, and as much out of sight as possible, so as to escape visitations from the armed parties constantly passing backwards and forwards from Gondar.

At nightfall we esteemed ourselves fortunate to perceive the conical roofs of some huts on a hill to our right, and, weary with want of food and rest, with parched lips and dusty skins, we spurred our jaded beasts towards them. To our surprise no group of curious natives came out to stare at us, and, though a few hens were still pecking round the dwellings, the whole place had an air of desertion that was oppressive in the extreme. However, it was now nearly dark, so Bo-Galla spread my blanket in an empty hut, and prepared to light a fire. Presently I saw peering in at the low aperture which served as a door, the face of an old man, worn to the last stage of emaciation. What he said I could not at first understand, but soon Bo-Galla made me acquainted with the horrible truth.

The village had been visited by an epidemic ophthalmia, which had rotted away the eyes of half the inhabitants, and caused them, only a few days before, to abandon it *en masse;* the very hut in which we were sitting had harboured the disease, said the old man, whose description of its ravages was enough to make one's flesh creep. He, it appeared, had only come back to recover some fowls that he was too poor to lose. We asked him where he had come from? and he told us there was another village and a monastery on a hill about a mile further on, so thither we were

soon spurring through the gloaming, nor did we seem to breathe freely till we were out of sight of the stricken hamlet.

It was dark before we reached the village of Tchemelge, the convent gates were closed for the night, and the villagers all rushed out, spear in hand, to demand the business of such late visitors; but when we had satisfied them that we were alone, and on our way to the king, they gave us accommodation in a large shanty, constructed of branches, which we shared very amicably with a cow and her calf. Our lodging was not at all wind-tight, but a large fire lighted in the middle of it soon sent forth enough smoke to have filled up twice as many chinks and crevices.

The Abyssinians believe in the malignant influence of the evil eye as implicitly as the Neapolitans, and when a chief of importance is eating in a strange place, his servants doff their *kuaries*, and hold them up like an awning round him, to guard him from the glance of any *gettatore* who might cause the food to work him harm. I found this superstition of great use, as by availing myself of it I could enjoy my meals in private, which otherwise the people of the villages we passed would never have been content to let me do.

I think this night was more wretched than all the other nights I ever passed in a native hut put together, for our shanty was infested with some horrible insect that bored its way under the skin, and produced the most frightful irritation. It was in vain I placed myself in the smoke of the fire till I was cured like a York

ham, in the hope of thus securing a little peace. I was soon in a fever, and at last rushed into the moonlight and lay down in the middle of a ploughed field outside the village, the fresh dewy earth of which afforded me a few hours' imprudent repose.

April 19th.—I was roused at 4 A.M. by Bo-Galla, who had come to look for me, having missed me from the hut. Lucky fellow! his thick brown hide had saved him from all attacks, and he had slept soundly and awakened refreshed, while I was in a fever and almost blinded by the unwholesome rays of the moon. As we had some distance to travel to regain the road to Gondar, we decided to start at once, and accordingly left the village without awaking anyone.

Of this day's ride I know little, for I was in a high fever, and racked with rheumatic pains. The sun, too, was so hot that towards mid-day I had perforce to halt for an hour under a tree, as I nearly fainted in the saddle, and when we resumed the march my head swam so that I could scarcely distinguish objects clearly. My servants would have halted, but this I was determined not to do if it could be avoided, as we were still far from the king's camp, and this was the last day of the Ethiopian Lent. Presently we met a mounted Abyssinian, who gave us the cheering news that the king's camp was on a mountain called Ambachara, and that he had left it an hour before sunrise that morning. Occasionally we passed numbers of little huts made of branches, and ranged in long rows like tents, but all deserted; these marked the places where the king's

army had halted at the end of each day's march. When the king halts he first sticks his spear in the ground where he wishes the royal tents to be placed, and his chiefs then make their camps near him, each taking up his position nearer or farther from the king according to his rank. Every chief knows how much ground his people take up, and what accommodation they require. Parties are sent out to cut branches and grass, and in an incredibly short time a little city of thatched huts, looking like ant-hills*, rises from the plain, to be abandoned perhaps the following day, and built again at the next spring of good water.

Every hour the pains in my limbs increased to such an extent that I could hardly sit still in the saddle for ten minutes together, and I looked anxiously for a village where I could hire porters to carry me on an *alga*. Towards sunset we met two officers of the royal household, with their attendants, who were collecting cattle for the king to distribute among his followers, so that each might enjoy a feast of raw meat as soon as the fast was over. They told us that there was no village near, and hearing that we had been unable to procure any food, one of them drew from his robe a couple of pieces of bread, with many apologies at not having anything better to offer. We were, however, only too glad to receive these crusts. Some time after we perceived a solitary lady, astride of a beautiful bay horse. This errant damsel stopped and gazed at us as

* I refer, of course, to the great mounds raised by the white ants.

we approached, her hair, which was unplatted, blowing in the wind behind her, then, suddenly turning her horse's head, she dashed away at a gallop towards the sinking sun, which threw her shadow far across the plain. We were surprised by the darkness as we neared a valley called (I think) Bonos; here there was a small pond of stagnant water surrounded by trees, where we had no choice but to halt for the night. My two servants lifted me off my horse, and we divided the bread amicably among ourselves and the beasts, as they had had no corn. We were forced to swallow a few mouthfuls of water, but it was literally as black as ink, and sent forth a stench which was only equalled in loathsomeness by its taste. I used to think that the courtiers of Don Pedro the Cruel carried gallantry rather far when they drank the water in which the lovely Maria de Padilla was wont to bathe; but the water we were now obliged to drink had been bathed in by every passing horse, mule, and ox, who had not failed to stir up all the decaying vegetable matter that lay at the bottom, and to bring it nearly to the consistency of a pea-soup, *muy ricco*, as the Spaniards would say. Our fire attracted a passing Abyssinian merchant, who shared with me some dry beans, of which we made quite a luxurious repast. He informed me that we were only four hours' ride from the king's camp at Ambachara, so I gave my letter to Bo-Galla, with directions that he should ride on with it as soon as the moon rose, and announce that I would arrive at the camp a few hours later.

April 20th.—At 5 A.M. Sinké saddled my horse, and we prepared to follow Bo-Galla. My feverishness had passed, but I was so stiff I could hardly move, and my poor steed was little better; however, we rode on at a fair pace, without stopping, for over four hours. Once, on our right, we caught a distant glimpse of the city of Gondar, standing at the edge of a plateau overlooking the fertile valley of Dembea, and to the left we could see the crests of several hills, for we were nearing the end of the table-land, and the ground we traversed began to be broken by valleys and ravines. Bo-Galla met us at a stream that flowed through a little valley less than a league from Ambachara, and helped me to make a hasty toilet, telling me the while that on the top of the hill beyond a company of the king's *naphteñas* were waiting to receive me. I found them ranged in two lines facing inwards, and as I rode up between them I was not a little astonished to hear clearly pronounced in English the commands: present arms; shoulder arms; right and left turn; quick march. A little lieutenant with a girlishly youthful face, a long parti-coloured silk robe, and a gigantic sword, came and walked beside my horse. He told me that he and his *naphteñas* had been trained by General K., who had taught them to perform their exercises to English words of command. He seemed very proud of his men, who in truth were a stalwart set of fellows, and marched beside us with their long rifles, decorated with jackal's tails, at a swinging pace that promised well for their activity in mountain warfare; most of

them, too, were good shots, for the Abyssinians are accustomed to shoot guinea-fowl and even smaller birds with ball.

As we descended the hill we saw before us Mount Ambachara with the numberless huts of the king's camp dotting its base. On an elevated spot, just below the grey craggy cone of the mountain, stood the king's tent and audience hall, enclosed by a stout fence. Below lay a narrow green valley with a stream running through it, and on the far horizon we could discern the waters of the great lake Tzana glittering in the sunlight like an inland sea.

At the confines of the camp I was greeted by the king's two interpreters—Murcher and Maderakal, both dressed in the long silk gowns of honour, decorated with little silver buttons, which the kings of Ethiopia bestow on their favourite courtiers. Murcher was a short stout man, Maderakal a tall thin one; they both spoke English well, and greeting me very civilly, conducted me to a tent which had been pitched for me on the right of the king's enclosure, and close by it. Spread in the bottom of this tent were some handsome carpets from the king's treasury for us to sit on. Maderakal told me that the moment the fast came to an end last night, they had all devoured so much raw meat that to-day everybody was at home in bed sleeping off the ill effects of the sudden change from vegetable to animal food; but that on the morrow the king would receive me and celebrate Easter with a great state banquet.

There were no less than thirty-eight seams in the

top of my tent, which was a native imitation of the Egyptian tents, made in the cotton cloth of Abyssinia. Unfortunately this material was too slight to keep out either the sun or rain, and a violent tropical thunder-storm that burst over the camp reduced my habitation to something very like a shower-bath. The king, however, did all that was in his power to make me comfortable, and presently sent me an additional carpet, two large *gombos* or jars of *tedge* and *tella*, fifty breads, an antelope's horn full of salt and pepper, and lastly, lest I should feel hungry, a live cow was led up to the door and killed and cut up before my eyes, according to the traditions of Abyssinian hospitality, the meat being piled up afterwards inside my tent. A servant of the king's also brought me four dishes of curry, prepared by the royal cook, a reverend priest who alone is permitted to prepare his Majesty's food, and, unlike other priests, may never marry, and must have always led a life of irreproachable virtue. The curries prepared by this important functionary were exquisitely cooked according to Abyssinian taste, but to my uneducated palate they simply tasted like fire, so hotly were they spiced.

In the evening, Murcher, the king's principal interpreter, very kindly asked me to go to his house, as it afforded a better shelter from the rain. This house was a little round edifice, cunningly constructed of wood and branches, the roof and walls being thickly thatched with grass; there was a raised couch opposite the entrance, which Murcher hospitably insisted on my

occupying while he and his family slept on skins by a fire kindled on the ground in the middle of the building, which having no other aperture than a low door, was very warm. Murcher's-horse, whose neck was adorned with a handsome chain, formed, as it were, one of the family circle, being lodged in a little thatched stall opening into the house. His food and drink were given him at regular intervals in a clean earthen dish, and the corn was the same as that of which the household bread was made ; in short, he freely shared all the comforts and privations of his master. I think there is something very kindly in this Abyssinian custom of making a cherished comrade and companion of the horse.

END OF VOL. I.

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